

April 21, 2020

RE: CARES Act, GEER Funds

Dear Governor Newsom and Superintendent Thurmond:

During this time of national crisis due to COVID-19, the California Alliance of Child and Family Services and California Association of Private Special Education Schools are supporting our membership of private nonprofit organizations by ensuring that they have the ability to stay open and provide critical services to children and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. One area in which our member agencies operate vital programs is in the education sector as Nonpublic Schools (NPS) and Agencies (NPA), providing educationally related mental health services or school based behavioral health services to students in both general and special education.

In addition to providing NPS students' distance learning opportunities in the short-term, it is equally critical to ensure that our NPS programs can remain in operation throughout and after the COVID-19 crisis. These nonprofit organizations provide a critical backbone of support for our most needy students and are a key part of the educational community. We respectfully ask that you utilize funding from the CARES Act signed by President Trump on March 27th to help stabilize and maintain NPS/As through this public health crisis in order to meet students' special education needs.

Toward that end, we urge you to consider the following uses of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Funds regarding nonprofit organizations who provide critical educational services as Nonpublic Schools and Agencies and who have workforce infrastructure not already protected fully under SB 117(Ting).

- **Ensure that Nonpublic Schools and Agencies are paid for all services in the Individual Services Agreements based on frequency and duration**
- **Ensure that agencies are provided continued funding for mental health services for students who are not eligible for Medi-Cal. These are critical social-emotional services to students.** Mental health and NPA services constitute roughly 60% of an NPS's budget; as a result, sustained funding for these programs is vital to the continued operation of these schools. Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) monies can provide a key source of funding for these services. ***For these fee-for-service payment mechanisms, we recommend applying an average daily rate per child based on the billed mental health services/NPA services provided for that child between July 1, 2019 and February 29, 2020.*** We are open to exploring any and all other payment scenarios, but urgently need confirmation that the districts will continue to pay for services during this time.
- **Ensure that a portion of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Funds to support the protection of education related jobs is allocated for nonprofit educational agencies serving students as NPSs or NPAs in economically disadvantaged communities.** These nonprofit organizations need financial support to retain staff and keep their doors open. Without funding,

organizations will be forced to lay off staff or close their doors entirely. Support for small and mid-sized businesses will ensure that organizations are still open when the pandemic ends.

- Consider the needs of our most vulnerable students, including California's foster youth. Providing supports or services to Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) or Resource Parents navigating distance learning is critical as these students are already so far behind. **Consider supplemental education-based payments to STRTPs to support the educational attainment of youth in residential care** to ensure they have educational, technological and behavioral supports necessary to help their children access distance education. Youth in STRTP's already face significant challenges that were impacting the system, now these needs are further increased. STRTPs are faced with now educating public school youth working on a distance learning plan with either the local district or their school or origin. Considerable resources, currently unfunded, will have to be used to support youth in their distance learning. Additionally, these staff in a congregate setting are working in person, often without Personal Protective Equipment that puts them at personal risk.

We deeply appreciate the many efforts the state is making to ensure that all students receive the support they need to weather this challenging crisis with the fewest possible setbacks. We value our partnership and look forward to continuing to build solutions that will enable our NPS/NPA programs to provide high quality and sustained distance learning and mental health supports for all our students.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further discussion or clarification on these suggestions. Thank you for your attention and concern for the students we are all committed to serving, and the programs and services that ensure them an equitable education. If you have questions, please contact Danielle Mole at dmole@cacfs.org or (916) 449-2273 x. 202.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Mertz', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Christine Stoner Mertz, LCSW
Chief Executive Officer