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Long Beach Unified School District Parents, Educators, Business and Civic Leaders Rally for Full Implementation of Transitional Kindergarten

“Save Kindergarten” Campaign Launches to Fight Budget Proposal to Eliminate Transitional Kindergarten

Long Beach, CA – February 7 – Long Beach Unified School District Superintendent Christopher J. Steinhauser today led community educators, parents, grandparents, business and civic leaders in a rally opposing Gov. Brown’s budget proposal to eliminate transitional kindergarten and thus deny up to 125,000 children the right to attend public school.

"We urge the governor to support transitional kindergarten and help close the achievement gap for 125,000 children," said Superintendent Steinhauser, in a rally at George Washington Carver School in Long Beach. "Long Beach has seen firsthand how children benefit from an extra year of preparation through transitional kindergarten. Our district is moving forward with fully implementing transitional kindergarten, but statewide support for this program is vital."

For the past five years, Long Beach Unified School District has run successful transitional kindergarten programs and remains committed to fully implementing transitional kindergarten in the fall.

“We’ve been delighted with the results of our transitional kindergarten pilot program and have seen firsthand the tremendous benefits of giving our youngest students a smart start,” Superintendent Steinhauser continued. “Our students are making dramatic progress, especially in language and literacy, and graduates are entering kindergarten with the confidence and love of learning that will follow them throughout their academic careers. Anyone who cares about public education should urge the California legislature to support the full implementation of transitional kindergarten.”

Media is invited to observe teachers and students in action by touring the transitional kindergarten classroom at George Washington Carver School, which launched this year.

“We were inspired to start our transitional kindergarten program at George Washington Carver School after watching students blossom when given the gift of time at other schools. Parents are eager to enroll their children and we are seeing the positive impact the program has on their future. No child should be denied this opportunity because of the governor's proposal,” said Jennifer Rodarte, principal of George Washington Carver School.

The rally kicks off a series of visibility events across California in support of the full implementation of transitional kindergarten organized by the Save Kindergarten coalition of school districts, superintendents, educators, parents, business and civic leaders and groups.

"It's shocking and disappointing that the governor would propose eliminating the right of up to 125,000 children to attend public school," said Oscar E. Cruz, President and CEO of Families in Schools. "All parents want a better life for their children and know that education is the pathway to lifelong success. This proposed cut to critical early education would have disastrous short and long-term consequences for our state's youngest learners."

Organizations in attendance include Preschool California, Families in Schools, Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), Los Angeles, YMCA of Greater Long Beach, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the California Kindergarten Association, AARP, Los Angeles Urban League, InnerCity Struggle and the Alliance for Better Communities.

"The governor's proposal is creating stress and uncertainty for families who were expecting to send their children to transitional kindergarten this fall and who cannot afford the financial burden of losing a year of income to stay home with their child or pay for last-minute daycare or preschool. Cutting transitional kindergarten is simply unacceptable," said Maria Elena Meraz, Executive Director, Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE).

"Transitional kindergarten is an investment in California's future. Research clearly shows that children who participate in school readiness programs like transitional kindergarten are more likely to do well in school, attend college and earn higher wages," said Sonia Campos-Rivera, Education Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.

"California cannot build a strong future workforce without well-educated high school graduates who are ready for college and careers, and this effort must start with our youngest learners. We support the full implementation of transitional kindergarten and highly recommend this be a budget neutral decision and invest time and energy in identifying workable solutions for implementation."

Fully implementing transitional kindergarten is in accordance with The Kindergarten Readiness Act – the California law that mandates changing the kindergarten entry date so that children enter school at age 5 and establishing transitional kindergarten, a developmentally-appropriate grade to serve those younger students with birthdays between September and December.

The governor's budget proposal is at odds with The Kindergarten Readiness Act, which remains the law and could impact 1 out of 4 kindergarten-aged students.

For more information on the Save Kindergarten Campaign visit:
www.preschoolcalifornia.org/savekindergarten.

Preschool California is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to increase access to high-quality early learning opportunities for all of California's children, starting with those who need it most.

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