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**OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**
Community Schools, Thriving Students

Board Cover Memorandum

To Board of Education

From Benjamin “Sam” Davis, President, Board of Education
Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Superintendent
Dexter Moore, Jr., Chief of Staff

Meeting Date March 13, 2024

Subject APPROVAL of State Budget Letter

Ask of the Board The Board of Education is requested to discuss and approve the 2024-2025 State Budget Letter of the Oakland Unified School District.

Background The budget letter provides the State with important considerations of key education budget priorities pertaining to the 2024-2025 Governor’s Budget on behalf of the Oakland Unified School District.

Discussion We recommend the Board approve the 2024-2025 State Budget Letter.

Fiscal Impact This year’s letter is informed by the District’s adopted 2024 Legislative Platform with input from School Services of California. While it addresses general fiscal issues, it is primarily tailored to address specific budget proposals. There are a number of fiscal impacts that can accrue through adoption of the State Budget Letter. Some of the positions can lead to increased funds for the District. Other positions can help avoid costly new mandates.

Attachment(s) 2024-2025 State Budget Letter

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**OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Community Schools, Thriving Students

BOARD OF EDUCATION 2024**Benjamin "Sam" Davis**, President, District 1Sam.Davis@ousd.org**Mike Hutchinson**, Vice President, District 4Mike.Hutchinson@ousd.org**Jennifer Brouhard**, District 2Jennifer.Brouhard@ousd.org**VanCedric Williams**, District 3VanCedric.Williams@ousd.org**Jorge Lerma**, District 5Jorge.Lerma@ousd.org**Valarie Bachelor**, District 6Valarie.Bachelor@ousd.org**Clifford Thompson**, District 7Clifford.Thompson@ousd.org

March 13, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review
Committee
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: 2024-25 Education Budget

Dear Governor Newsom, Senator Skinner, and Assembly Member Gabriel,

On behalf of the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), we urge you to negotiate and pass a budget for K-12 public education that protects students, staff, and local communities from state funding reductions and that prioritizes investments that allow local educational leaders to make fiscal decisions that address their unique community needs.

To this end, the OUSD encourages you to consider prioritizing the following education budget policies:

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

OUSD's paramount priority is providing our students with optimal opportunities to engage in their learning and promote a healthy sense of belonging and community. To achieve this, we must be able to invest in our educators and staff who support them every day and to provide livable, competitive wages that make teaching and working in OUSD an attractive career choice. For this reason, we urge you to make budget investments in the LCFF your highest priority. This includes not just fully funding the statutory cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), but it also includes providing funding for the LCFF above COLA with any additional Proposition 98 resources.

OUSD has been in a sustained period of declining enrollment, like most districts across the state. Furthermore, while we are making strides to normalize student attendance to reflect pre-pandemic patterns, anomalous student absence rates continue to present challenges. The combination of declining enrollment and lower-

than-trend attendance rates means that a COLA of less than 1.0% results in a reduction in LCFF resources in 2024-25 from our current level.

For this reason, it is imperative that the state prioritize mitigating against this dynamic by providing funding above the statutory COLA in 2024-25.

Avoid Funding Reductions and Reallocation of Prior Investments

OUSD appreciates Governor Newsom's extraordinary effort to protect students, staff, and local communities from the harm that would come from reducing funding to districts to address a \$9 billion drop in the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee for fiscal year 2022-23. We appreciate that the Governor recognizes that the funds provided to us last fiscal year have already been spent, and OUSD (like most districts) negotiated compensation packages in good faith with our labor partners based on the funds we were provided. *OUSD urges you to find a budget solution that allows districts to retain their funds and avoid implementing funding cuts in arrears, which would devastate the education community.*

Similarly, while we understand that you have difficult budget decisions to make to address the state's multi-billion-dollar budget deficit, *we urge you to refrain from reallocating education investments that were previously made* as districts like OUSD have been planning and working hard to compete for funding that we know will benefit our students, such as the California Community Schools Partnership Program. Although funds have not yet been allocated or awarded to districts, it is important to acknowledge that communities like Oakland are relying on the promise of them.

One-Time Discretionary Allocations

Consistent with the need to prioritize funding that allow educational leaders to make local budget decisions that are right for their communities, *we urge you to appropriate any available one-time Proposition 98 funds as discretionary dollars* and refrain from appropriating them for restricted purposes. During a period of lean resources, it is imperative that local districts retain discretion to maximize their funds for optimal use and outcomes for students. While OUSD believes that it is important to address the impacts of climate change by investing in technology that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, such as electric school buses, the district has other urgent fiscal priorities that could be funded with one-time discretionary resources, including academic acceleration, mental health services, and staff retention. If the state were to allocate the roughly \$500 million Proposition 98 funds for electric buses as discretionary funding, OUSD's share would be approximately \$3.0 million.

Early Transitional Kindergarten Class Size Maximum Policy

Finally, OUSD supports California's policy that will ensure that every four-year-old will have access to a high-quality early learning program through universal Transitional Kindergarten (TK) by the 2025-26 school year. We know that research consistently shows that investments in early learning yield academic and economic benefits for students.

OUSD encourages you to revisit the policy adopted through the summer education trailer bill that limits the size of classes enrolling early TK students (those with fifth birthdays occurring after June 2) to 20 students. As one of the largest early learning providers in Alameda County, OUSD believes in and supports policies that promote high-quality interactions between adults and children in preschool settings. We believe that teacher-to-student ratios consistent with California State Preschool standards are appropriate. However, the

2023 Budget Act's class size limit of 20 students creates untenable (and unachievable) resource pressures for OUSD, including inadequate classroom space to accommodate the redesign of TK classrooms to comply with the policy, as well as the additional teaching and classified staffing resources that would be needed to meet the requirement.

We urge you to revisit the Early TK class size cap and to allow local districts to serve young TK students in a classroom of 24 students if it is more cost-effective for the district to staff the program using an 8-to-1 student to teacher ratio. This modest policy adjustment would help OUSD maximize our facilities and staffing resources while maintaining high-quality classroom environments that allow for meaningful engagement between teachers and students.

Thank you for the opportunity to share OUSD's priorities for the 2024-25 education budget. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Patti Herrera (pattih@sscal.com) and Leilani Aguinaldo (leilania@sscal.com).

OUSD looks forward to working with you over the coming months to adopt an education budget that protects and prioritizes our students.

Sincerely,



Benjamin "Sam" Davis
President, Board of Education



Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Cc: The Honorable John Laird, Subcommittee #1, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
The Honorable David Alvarez, Subcommittee #3, Assembly Budget Committee
Chris Ferguson, Department of Finance
Brooks Allen, State Board of Education
Yong Salas, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Erin Gabel, Assembly Budget Committee