



CCSESA

California County Superintendents Educational Services Association

1121 L Street, Suite 510, Sacramento, CA 95814 ■ P 916.446.3095 ■ F 916.448.7801 ■ www.ccsesa.org

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May 2, 2017

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA), a statewide association representing all 58 California county superintendents of schools, I am writing to urge you to support the inclusion of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) funding in the Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Resolution. SRS provides important funding for hundreds of California schools and thousands of California students.

SRS provides critical funding for California schools and county offices of education. Although California is home to some of the largest cities in the U.S., the state also has one of the biggest rural student populations in the country-- rural California districts and county offices serve more than 220,000 students and 40% of California school districts have less than 1,000 students. Before SRS was passed in 2000, many of these schools were dramatically underfunded due to declining timber sales and court-imposed restrictions on extraction. Using SRS payments, rural California schools have incorporated 21st century technology into classrooms, enhanced curriculum offerings, lowered student to teacher ratios, and hired counselors to help guide students toward career and college goals. If SRS is not reauthorized, many of these quality improvements will begin to disappear in 2017.

SRS funds help even the playing field for rural schools and county offices of education. Because of their remoteness, rural California schools face significant financial, administrative and infrastructure challenges. As one of the geographically largest states in the union, the cost of student transportation in rural California districts is more than two times greater than the national average. Connecting schools to essential technology services is substantially more difficult and more expensive in California's rural, mountainous areas. Furthermore, despite adopting cost-saving techniques such as consortiums and regional service models, construction and facilities costs are still often greater, utilities are more expensive, and important student services are often more costly in rural California regions. Without SRS dollars to even the playing field, California's rural students will fall farther and farther behind their urban and suburban counterparts.

As SRS funding has been phased out over the last several years, students have been significantly impacted as teachers and other education professionals have been laid off, extracurricular programs have been eliminated, and facilities and technology updates have been postponed indefinitely. Now that the final SRS payments have been issued, California's rural schools have again been forced to start planning for programmatic cuts that will inevitably disadvantage the students in their communities. As an advocate for all of California's students, CCSESA strongly urges Congress to include 2016-17 SRS funding in the 2017 Budget Resolution and to support the reauthorization of ongoing SRS funding. Please contact us if we can provide additional information on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Peter Birdsall
CCSESA Executive Director