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**WEST CONTRA COSTA  
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

1108 Bissell Avenue  
Richmond, CA 94801  
510-231-1100

June 3, 2023

Dear Senator Skinner,

I am reaching out to advocate for the preservation of state funding for the Golden State Pathways Program, a vital support for career technical education programs in schools such as ours in the West Contra Costa Unified School District.

The Golden State Pathways Program will allow our district to provide relevant and rigorous pathways for young people in our community. These pathways prepare students for both college *and* career, providing our students with an opportunity to envision themselves as professional and acquire the necessary skills to achieve success in the earliest stages of their careers.

The proposed budget cut of \$400 million would nearly eliminate the Golden State Pathways program. Total program funding is \$500 million, so an 80 percent cut would severely reduce access to rigorous, college preparatory coursework, and would similarly reduce opportunities to learn through work-based learning experiences for our students who need hands-on learning opportunities the most.

The last few years have been brutal for our young people and communities, especially in West Contra Costa County. Our economic systems are still reeling from pandemic disruptions, inflation, and labor shortages. Our educational systems are also in deep struggle, with chronic absenteeism on the rise, college enrollment in decline, and student disengagement at an all-time high. In WCCUSD, we are working urgently to recover from an unprecedented decline in enrollment and a deeply concerning rise in chronic absenteeism.

Fortunately, we have over a decade of evidence that tells us what works to keep young people engaged in learning and well-prepared for life after high school.

That [evidence](#) is clear: These pathways benefit low-income students and students of color by improving graduation rates and increasing access to A-G coursework and dual enrollment opportunities. Students who participate in these pathways transition to and persist in postsecondary education at higher rates than their peers. These pathways provide a tremendous benefit to students in becoming ready for college and a career.

In addition to being a sound educational strategy, this is also a workforce development strategy – these pathways help prepare young people for high-wage, high-demand careers in their community. This is crucial

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to California's economic future.

We cannot afford to lose the talent of our young scholars. We cannot afford to sit still or backslide on equity. Instead, we must work harder and smarter than ever to connect learning and workforce development meaningfully through Golden State Pathways.

Please maintain the level of funding for Golden State Pathways at \$500 million and reject the proposed cut of \$400 million to the Golden State Pathways Program that was approved by the Senate and Assembly.

We recognize the tough fiscal context the state is facing, and we ask: please don't balance the budget on the backs of marginalized students.

The state's investment in Golden State Pathways builds on the kinds of successes we've seen in West Contra Costa and countless other communities throughout the state. Our educators continuously hear from former students who have achieved a professional and economic foothold in adulthood as a result of the opportunities that they received in career technical pathways. Strong investment in this program can significantly help us create the conditions to scale those successes across our whole region.

Golden State Pathways is critical to bringing West Contra Costa Unified's vision of equity, excellence and opportunity to life for more young people in our district. We already have plans in motion to use these funds to:

- o Significantly expand college and career-based learning opportunities, ensuring that every young person has access to the experiences and support they need for success, and
- o Establish clear standards and accountability measures that will help us truly advance excellence and equity in educational outcomes within the next five years.

We cannot afford to pull back on our promise to our students and communities and shortchange their potential as future leaders, innovators, and providers for generations to come.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Hurst Sr.", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dr. Kenneth "Chris" Hurst Sr.  
Superintendent, WCCUSD

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