

Superintendent and Governing Board
San Joaquin County Office of Education
2922 Transworld Drive
Stockton, CA 95206

June 17, 2021

Dear Superintendents Mousalimas, Brown, and Board Members of San Joaquin County Office of Education,

As representatives and leaders from our county's non-profit, government, business, and advocacy communities, we are reaching out to you today about the momentous opportunity our school districts have before them in the American Rescue Plan (ARP).

By this summer, over \$500 million in federal stimulus dollars for education will be allocated to the 5 largest school districts and the county office of education serving San Joaquin County students [according to EdSource](#):

- **Stockton USD:** ~\$250M Total Stimulus(\$139.8M from ARP)
- **Lodi USD:** ~\$120M Total Stimulus (\$59.7M from ARP)
- **Manteca USD:** ~\$74M Total Stimulus (\$35.1M from ARP)
- **Tracy USD:** ~\$40M Total Stimulus (\$19.0M from ARP)
- **Lincoln USD:** ~\$30M Total Stimulus (\$14.5M from ARP)
- **San Joaquin County Office of Education:** ~\$16M Total Stimulus (\$7.2M from ARP)

In some cases, this is as much as an entire year's extra budget that will need to be spent over a 2-3 year period, and in all cases dwarfs any previous stimulus package we've seen in our lifetimes.

We acknowledge the historic challenge this past year has presented, and applaud you and your educators for the inspiring efforts to serve children during this difficult time. We also know that much like us in the community, as district and county leaders you still have much to learn from both the state and the federal government about how this next round of stimulus dollars can be used, and how it will fit in with the larger budget picture for your school system.

With that in mind, we reach out today because we believe if we work together - with local leaders, families, and community members - we can collectively ensure these dollars make a real difference in the lives of Stockton children. If used effectively, this funding not only can help school districts recover from the immediate setbacks of the pandemic, but will also allow us to make investments that position our schools to better serve students well into the future.

In this spirit, we recently have engaged our respective communities about how districts might most effectively move forward to invest this money, and are sharing some basic guiding principles that came out of these conversations to support you in determining next steps. In addition we have included the results of a community survey conducted in May, which focuses on the thoughts parents and community members have regarding the potential uses for the funds. We hope these can serve as a starting point for a more robust set of conversations and collaborative planning work in the coming months and years:

1. **Engage the Community and Create Oversight for Spending:** With this much money coming into our region, families and community members should have an opportunity to share their priorities for how to use these dollars, and should have oversight of how the money is spent over the next three years. Surveys, focus groups, forums, town halls, and public meetings can all be effective ways to learn from and communicate with community members.
2. **Pay Attention to Both Short and Long-Term Priorities:** Coming back stronger from the pandemic is extremely important next year, and so is using this influx of dollars to create better schools, systems, and supports for students over the long-term that will prepare them for college, career, and life after school.

3. **Allocate Money on Research-Based Bold Ideas:** The federal government has been bold in committing these dollars to our community, and we should not waste this opportunity. While 20% of dollars must be allocated to school re-opening and covid related learning loss, the rest of these dollars are flexible for a reason. Our community should examine research-based initiatives proven to improve student learning like PreK, intensive tutoring, Early College High School or dual degree programs, and replication of our best existing schools and programs to make these investments in our children count.

4. **Be Mindful These Are One-Time Funds:** Given the nature of these dollars - that they are not recurring - districts must make sure not to sink them into recurring costs such as permanent staffing, pensions, or other costs that would create long-term funding commitments that districts won't be able to meet once this money is used. That means these dollars are better used for foundation building or start-up costs for programs, perhaps into facilities or technology that doesn't need to be purchased every year, or of course to provide one-time interventions and support in response to issues created by the pandemic.

5. **Transparently Measure What You Do:** Once it is determined how districts will spend dollars, they should transparently share this information with their community online and through public meetings. We also strongly urge districts to set measurable goals for student learning with new programs and to track progress toward these goals in public.

We know that deadlines are quickly approaching to set budgets, and to outline initial plans for how this money will be allocated. We also trust that as leaders you will use your judgment where needed to bring immediate relief to our students - but we also urge you to engage our community broadly before moving toward final spending allocations and implementation across the three-year window. We believe that as we all look toward a post-pandemic future and try to figure out what is best for our children, whatever solutions we identify will be stronger if done together.

Sincerely,

Betty Wilson
Executive Director, Business Council of San Joaquin



Denise Ost
CEO, Goodwill Industries of San Joaquin Valley



Carol Ornelas
Chief Executive Officer, Visionary Home Builders of California



Don Shalvey
Chief Executive Officer, San Joaquin A+



Christine Noguera
Chief Executive Officer, Community Medical Centers



Fritz Grupe
Board Chairman, Business Council of San Joaquin



Kristen Spracher-Birtwhistle
President/CEO, United Way of SJ County



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Janae Aptaker
Director of Stockton Scholars Program & Strategy



Jasmine Dellafosse
Senior Regional Organizer, Gathering for Justice



Joelle Gomez
Children's Home of Stockton



Jose Rodriguez
President & CEO, El Concilio



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Chief Executive Officer, Family Resource & Referral Center



Keenon Krick
Chief Executive Officer, Second Harvest of the Greater Valley



Kelly Wilson
Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club of Tracy



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Chief Executive Officer, Emergency Food Bank



Lindy Turner-Hardin
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