



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Ken Blackstone
(408) 453-6514

Strong Start Delegation Advocates for Early Learning Programs at State Capitol

SACRAMENTO, CA – [A delegation of 16 Silicon Valley community and education leaders](#) representing the [Strong Start Initiative](#), including County Superintendent of Schools Jon Gundry, County Board of Education members Grace Mah and Joseph Di Salvo, Evergreen School District Superintendent Kathy Gomez, and school district trustees Ellen Wheeler and Bonnie Mace, visited California legislators on Monday to advocate for increased support of early learning programs in the upcoming state budget. The delegation met with legislators from Santa Clara County, the Chair of the Legislative Women’s Caucus, staff from the legislative leadership, the Governor’s office and the State Board of Education, and with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to discuss Gov. Brown’s May revisions to the state’s proposed 2016-17 budget.

“The decisions made regarding early childhood education should be made as part of the legislative process, not determined as an item in the annual budget process,” said Superintendent Gundry.

Legislators and their staffs were largely receptive to the Strong Start delegation’s support for restoring funding to early learning programs, particularly the proposal from the Legislative Women’s Caucus to increase funding by \$800 million, and to reject any proposal that eliminates Transitional Kindergarten or moves it away from its current funding model based upon attendance.

The delegation also addressed the state’s early learning programs more broadly. In particular, support was conveyed for AB 2368 (Gordon), co-sponsored by the Santa Clara County Office of Education, which would establish a pilot program for Santa Clara County to provide flexibility in the implementation of early childhood education programs to better meet local needs; and for AB 2660 (McCarty) that would require the state to develop a plan to implement high quality pre-kindergarten to all eligible children following input from a community of stakeholders.

Comments and input were provided during discussions with Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson, 19th district and Chair of the Senate Women’s Caucus; Assembly Members Richard Gordon (24th district) and Evan Low (28th district), Sen. Jim Beall (15th district), State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, and representatives from the offices of Gov. Brown and Senate President pro Tem Kevin de León during the day-long visit at the state capitol.

[Strong Start](#) is a coalition of community leaders, school districts, early education providers, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, members of the business community and other key stakeholders who are committed to expanding access to high quality early learning opportunities for all children age 0 to 8 in Santa Clara County. For more information, visit strongstartsantaclara.org.

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