

ADVOCACY INSIDER

June 12, 2020



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KATHLEEN FAY TESTIFIES BEFORE SENATE IN SUPPORT OF SB 943

While still in the thick of COVID-19 quarantines last month, I was excited to testify – from a safe electronic distance – on behalf of California State PTA as the “lead witness” supporting SB 943 (Chang) before the Senate Standing Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement.

Two big reasons for my excitement: First, this was my first time testifying for any bill, because I’m a first-year newbie on the CAPTA Leg Team. For an enthusiastic public policy geek, this is like getting called up from the bench to join the first-string players after seasons of watching with wide eyes from the sidelines. Second, it was a bill which would offer important support for California’s parents struggling to provide for their families financially while suddenly finding themselves to be homeschoolers amid public school closures.

Authored by Senator Ling Ling Chang, passage of SB 943 would amend the state’s Paid Family Leave program to include coverage for workers who, because of quarantine measures put in place to protect us all, must take time off of work to care for a child whose school has been closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. CAPTA took a “SUPPORT” position on the bill because we believe that society has a responsibility to ensure assistance programs that help families survive a temporary crisis and protect children from the extreme effects of poverty. Federal measures may help many, but according to the legislative analyst’s office, will leave just as many Californians behind. It is in the best interest of children to reduce or eliminate barriers that impede parents’ ability to provide for their care, protection, learning, growth, and development – especially during times of distress.

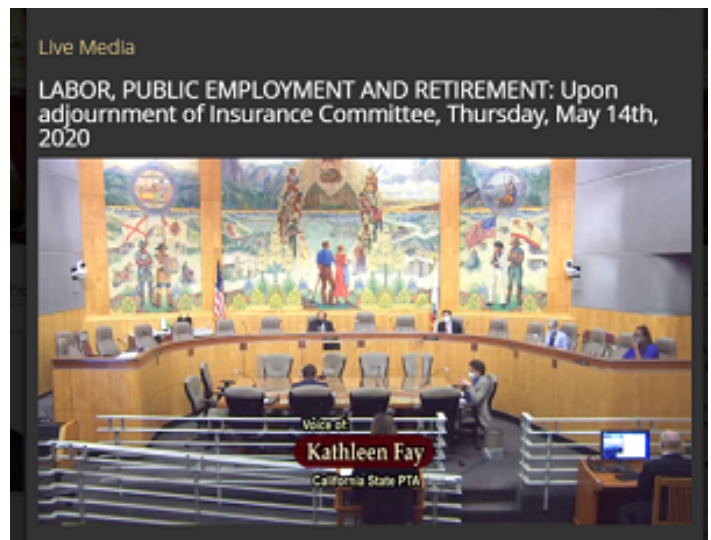
So I practiced my testimony, cut it down to bare essentials, and practiced again. I watched and listened to the hearings live from my laptop to learn how they were handling the process: advocates would call a given number, enter the right codes, and offer their comments while adhering to strict time limits. I was impressed by how diligent the chairman was about ensuring that everyone had a chance to be heard.

The Senator’s staffer in charge of the bill kept me updated then texted me as the bill approached its turn. I heard the Chairman announce my name and organization and saw it overlay the video feed when it was my turn to speak. And even though I may not be the smoothest public speaker, there is something about doing the right thing – speaking up

on behalf of California's families – that boosts courage and gives voice to a cause that matters. I knew that California's families – with their hard-working parents – would benefit from the bill's protections to get them through this difficult time and preserve a more stable future for our state.

It felt great to be part of the process – a process that I learned about through PTA...and that lasted for hours with nary a break – again, I was impressed. What could be more fun than that? Just one more thing: I got to see it passed by a committee vote of 5-0. It is good to be on the right team!

Kathleen Fay is a California State PTA Legislative Advocate.



FEDERAL UPDATE

Action Alert Results in over 10,000 Letters to Federal Legislators: Last month, California State PTA members sent over 10,000 letters to our Senators Feinstein and Harris as well as our California Congressmembers, asking them to include \$200 billion for schools in the next COVID-19 relief package. These letters were gathered together and sent to both Speaker of the House Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader McConnell. With over 3,000 new participants, this campaign had the highest number of PTA members taking action than any of our previous efforts!

Our advocacy work was aided last week by a powerful letter from lawmakers regarding the need for significant federal support for public schools during this crisis. The [letter](#) from over 100 congressional leaders was sent to the leaders of the House and Senate. It implores Congress to set aside a \$305 billion stabilization fund for K-12 education in the next Coronavirus relief package. The lawmakers, who included many of our California Representatives, noted that “Without significant federal support, our states will struggle to support their public schools, and our students will feel the brunt of the result.”



Though a fourth COVID-19 relief package passed in the House two weeks ago, it falls woefully short of the money necessary to effectively support our schools. The \$3 trillion relief package includes:

- \$90 Billion to the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund through the Department of Education of which 65% has to go to school districts
- \$3 billion for school meals
- \$1.5 billion for K-12 student connectivity through the E-rate program
- \$4 billion for broadband access
- \$10 billion for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- \$10 billion for the Emergency Injury Disaster Loan Program
- Eliminates a 1% set-aside for “microgrants” proposed by the Secretary of Education

The relief package is now in the hands of the Senate. Senate leaders and the President have indicated that the HEROES package will not pass or be signed into law as presented. This means that your voice is still needed to speak up on behalf of California's school children. [Click here](#) to go to the CAPTA website and take action to let your representatives know how you feel about the importance of an additional federal investment in schools. Without additional federal relief funds, California will see a \$10 billion cut to K-12 schools.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE?

This year over 2,300 bills were written by California legislators. That number is about average for a typical legislative session. What isn't typical is how many of those bills were given a hearing. In a "normal" year, most of the bills written are heard in a committee.



Committees typically meet once a week between March and July. Due to the coronavirus and the two-month shut down of the Capitol, most committees only met once and the majority of bills did not receive a hearing. The Senate Education Committee usually hears around 75 bills and this year considered only five. The Assembly Education Committee typically hears over 100 bills and this year only heard 14.

The official wording is - this bill was "rescinded due to the shortened 2020 legislative calendar." How was it decided which bills would be given a hearing and which would not?

Many legislators, recognizing the problems facing the state, pulled their bills. Others were told by the committee chairs that their bills weren't critical for this year and would not be given a hearing. The Assembly Committee on Higher Education set out a list of criteria to rank bills worthy of hearing. The list included questions such as asking if the bill addresses a time-sensitive problem related to COVID-19. Bills that required state spending were often the first to go due to the dire state of the CA budget. Bills that were not deemed "vital" or "essential" were not given hearings.

Because this is the second year of the two-year legislative session, any bills that were not given a hearing will die. Legislators are permitted to rewrite a bill and introduce it again next year.

In a normal year, the Governor would sign hundreds of bills by the September 30th deadline. This year will be vastly different. Even the state budget is being considered and negotiated in a shortened time frame by the legislature which by state law must pass a budget by June 15th. Stay tuned for more updates as this unusual year unfolds!

SCHOOLS NEED MORE MONEY, NOT LESS!

The legislature and the Governor are negotiating details of the budget which must be passed by the state legislature by June 15. They are taking significantly different approaches to mitigate the loss of education funding.

- The Governor proposes budget cuts that would take effect immediately and would be rescinded if federal relief money is provided.
- The Legislature's proposal does not make cuts but provides for large deferrals if the federal government does not provide additional funding for schools in the fall. Deferrals are late payments by the state to school districts.



We support the Legislature's approach to avoid immediate cuts and delay any deferrals until later in the year, when the state will have a better understanding of state and federal revenues.

We appreciate the efforts of the legislature and the governor to reduce the damage to schools. However, schools need more money, not less.

Preparing each classroom, library, gym, lunchroom, and school bus for the safe return of students, teachers, and staff will require significant resources and planning.

Without adequate funding, this will not be feasible. There will not be enough money for required additional staff and associated increased costs to keep our children and staff safe.

The state cannot rely solely on the federal government to provide additional funding. We are asking the Legislature

and Governor to consider additional revenue options even after the June 15th budget deadline.

Take Action: Please click the button below to contact the legislature and the Governor and tell them that schools need more money, not less.

TAKE ACTION

DON'T MISS NEXT MONTH'S ADVOCACY WEBINAR

The Legislation team has been holding monthly webinars packed with the latest information on what is happening in Sacramento, Washington DC and around the country that impacts our schools, children and families.

Our survey results told us that you wanted us to continue these webinars through the summer months, so here is the schedule of upcoming webinars:

- **Wednesday, July 1, 7:00-8:00 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, August 4, 7:00-8:00 p.m.**

To register for either of these webinars, click here and select the relevant date:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/2338789182473643275>

To watch a recording of the June 3rd webinar, [click here](#).



TAKE ACTION!

What's New in the Resource Library? WATER!



This month's featured resources are from the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Project WET, the CA Dept. of Water Services and Aquarium of the Pacific.

BROWSE NOW

View the Reflections Art Program Winning Entries



Congratulations to the winners of the 2019-2020 Reflections Art Program! You can see and hear their amazing works now on our website.

BROWSE NOW

Student Leadership Academy Deadline Extended



The deadline for students to apply to join Ed100's online summer leadership academy has been extended to July 6!

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