February 22, 2019

Senator Richard Roth, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: 2019-20 Budget Request

Dear Chairman Roth:

As classroom teachers and Teach Plus Policy Fellows, we are writing to identify opportunities we see in this year’s budget to build on progress California has recently made to ensure that educators have the tools they need to succeed. We believe that increased investment in targeted professional learning for educators, teacher residencies as a tool for building a teaching force that better reflects our student body, and building capacity of local education agencies (LEAs) to implement the English Learner Roadmap will have meaningful impact on student outcomes.

As part of our work as Teach Plus Policy Fellows, we have been exploring these three areas as we believe they are essential to ensuring every student has an equitable opportunity to learn: support for new teachers, diversity of the teaching force, and investing in our emergent bilingual students. Investing in rigorous support with high-quality mentorship for new teachers, who are disproportionately placed in under-resourced schools, can contribute to improved outcomes for our students, particularly those who have been historically underserved. Further, research has shown that having a teaching force of effective educators that also reflects the diversity of their students can have long-term benefits for our children. And with more than 20 percent of our K-12 students categorized as English Learners, improving their academic outcomes is essential for California’s future. We recommend three investments in the 2019-20 budget to begin to address these issues that are consistent with California’s recent strategies and investment for school improvement.

Establish Fund for Educator Growth and Learning- In our exploration of all three of these issues, it became clear that districts need to invest more in professional learning for their teachers. If we are serious about school and student improvement, then teachers need support to improve their practice. As the state identifies priorities like the transition from the compliance-focused BTSA program to robust induction programs with quality mentors, or the shift embodied in the EL Roadmap to integrate language development, literacy and content learning, it makes sense also to provide additional resources to support local districts to meet those expectations. By establishing a grant program, the state can signal the importance of these strategies without undermining the value of local control.

We believe that there should be an ongoing state commitment to support professional learning for educators, as the needs of our students and the role of teachers are ever-changing. We recommend that the state establish the Fund for Educator Growth and Learning (the EGL Fund) and fund it with a portion of settle-up funds every year they are available. For the 2019-20 budget, we propose allocating ½ of the settle-up funds for the EGL Fund and prioritizing grants for LEAs focused on improving their induction programs to meet the robust standards established by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and LEAs prioritizing professional development focused on implementing the EL Roadmap. Establishing it as a grant program allows

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LEAs to apply for funding to support programming for teachers that directly responds to the needs of their students and teachers, as related to the needs assessment and strategies identified in their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

**Broaden Investment in Teacher Residencies to Diversify our Teaching Force** - For the 2018–19 fiscal year, the Legislature allocated seventy-five million dollars to establish the Teacher Residency Grant Program to provide one-time competitive grants to LEAs to develop new, or expand existing, teacher residency programs that recruit and support the preparation of special education, bilingual education, science, technology, engineering or mathematics teachers. Several studies have shown that high-quality teacher residency programs are effective both in bringing more teachers of color into the profession and in preparing them to stay long-term. In a state where 63% of our teaching force is White but 75% of our students identify as something other than White, we believe teacher residency programs are important tools in building a teaching force that looks more like the student body we teach. We therefore recommend that the state invest an additional $25 million to expand the Teacher Residency Grant Program to address the needs of districts with significant disparities between the demographics of their student body and teaching force.

**Expand State System of Support to Build Capacity to Implement the EL Roadmap** - The adoption of the EL Roadmap by the State Board of Education in 2017 represented an important shift in how we think about our English Learner students. We are pleased that it brings to light the value of our diversity as a state and all the assets our students bring, but a policy framework alone is not enough. If we want to see changes in our student outcomes, we must invest in translating these principles to action. We recommend that the state invest $4 million annually for three years to establish a Community of Practice as part of California’s System of Support that is focused on strengthening and improving policies, programs, and practices for English Learners throughout the state. It would establish connections to the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and Title III Plan, leading to meaningful goals and outcomes requiring full access to curriculum, assuring meaningful progress toward attaining academic English proficiency, and closing gaps in academic achievement for students who are English Learners.

We believe that these three focused investments can help build on the foundation of our current education policy framework by investing directly in California’s educators and addressing the diverse needs of our students. If you have any questions about our recommendations, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our names and email addresses are below.

Sincerely,

Sarah Lillis  
Executive Director  
Teach Plus California  
sllulis@teachplus.org  
916.761.1385

[www.teachplus.org](http://www.teachplus.org)
Ron Anaya  
7th Grade ELA Teacher  
Rocklin Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
ronanaya@gmail.com

Heather Fitzgerald  
Elementary Teacher, Math and Science  
Torrance Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
heatherfitzgerald@live.com

Richard Barclay  
High School History Teacher  
Da Vinci Design Charter High School, Los Angeles  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
rickbarclay8@gmail.com

Karina Gensicke  
Kindergarten Teacher  
Los Angeles Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
biggirl42@sbcglobal.net

Julianne Beebe  
11th Grade AP English Language and Composition Teacher  
Long Beach Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
joobllbb@gmail.com

Daniel Helena  
6th Grade English Teacher  
Kory Hunter Middle School, Los Angeles  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
dhelena125@gmail.com

Katherine Blackburn  
5th Grade Teacher  
Oakland Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
kiblackbu@gmail.com

Dr. Amelia Herrera  
English Language Development Teacher  
Modesto City Schools  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
herrerraamelia@comcast.net

Spencer Burrows  
6th Grade Teacher  
Crete Academy, Los Angeles  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
spencer.burrows@gmail.com

Erica Marlaine  
Special Education Preschool Teacher  
Los Angeles Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
erica.marlaine@lausd.net

Gwendolyn Delgado  
7th and 8th Grade History Teacher  
William Hart School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
gsdelgad@usc.edu

Paulina Martinez  
6th grade Spanish Language Arts Teacher  
Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School, Chula Vista  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
paulina.martinez.perez@gmail.com

Natalie Fensterstock  
English Teacher  
West Contra Costa Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
nfensterstock@gmail.com

V. Xavier Nguyen  
Special Education Teacher  
Long Beach Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
ProfessorXNguyen@gmail.com

www.teachplus.org
Christina Nitsos  
First Grade Teacher  
Lafayette School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
cnitsos@lafsd.org

Andres Perez  
High School English Teacher  
High Tech High, San Diego  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
andperez@hightechhigh.org

Cinda Rapp  
Special Education Teacher  
West Contra Costa Unified School District  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
CRapp@wccusd.net

Nikki Revell  
11th and 12th grade English Teacher  
New Designs Charter School, Los Angeles  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
nikkileablunt@gmail.com

Charles Snow  
Instructional Coach  
TFA Los Angeles  
2018-2019 Teach Plus Fellow  
cesnow.cs@gmail.com

Gregory Williams  
Secondary English Teacher  
Narbonne High School  
Los Angeles Unified School District  
gregory.l.williams@lausd.net

CC: Members of the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education  
Elisa Wynne, Deputy Staff Director