



March 27, 2019

Assemblymember Jose Medina
Chair, Committee on Higher Education
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, Room 173
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: AB 843 (Rodriguez) as amended March 14, 2019 – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Medina:

As classroom teachers and Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellows, we are writing to express our support for AB 843, which would restore funding for the Assumption Program of Loans for Education (APLE), providing loan assistance to reduce the burden of student loans for future and current teachers in mathematics, science, special education, bilingual education, or career technical education in a school district that is determined to be in need of differentiated assistance based on their performance on the California School Dashboard.

AB 843's approach is a smart strategy adding to the arsenal of tools to help address the state's teacher shortage challenges. In recent years California school districts have experienced acute teacher shortages, especially in mathematics, science, and special education, with 80% reporting a shortage in the most recent survey.¹ We can see the shortage also manifesting itself with an increased number of waivers and permits being issued where there are no appropriately credentialed teachers available. The number of waivers and permits nearly quadrupled between 2012 and 2017, with nearly 8,000 issued in 2016-17, as reported by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

The Learning Policy Institute has reported that shortages are most severe in special education, in mathematics and science. Shortages are also emerging in bilingual education since voters passed Proposition 58. Research has shown the long-term positive impacts on English Learners in well-implemented bilingual programs. However, well-implemented bilingual programs require well-prepared teachers. The targeted investment of AB 843 can help mitigate this growing bilingual teacher shortage.

AB 843 proposes a reasonable approach to trying to draw more teachers into the profession and directing them to the fields where there is the greatest need. Teachers earn about 30% less than other college graduates, therefore the burden of student loans debt is felt more acutely by new educators. We have seen how this can be discouraging to some to enter the profession, as it is difficult to imagine paying off their student debt. Previous iterations of the APLE program have been effective in recruiting teachers into the targeted areas.

¹ "Teacher Shortages in California: Status, Sources and Potential Solutions," Getting Down to Facts II, September 2018, Technical Report.

We believe that AB 843 can also begin to help address another problem facing California's teaching workforce - a lack of diversity. While only 25 percent of California's students identify as white, more than 60 percent of our teachers do.² This gap between students and teachers of color is problematic because numerous studies show that teachers of color have profound and positive impacts on the learners they serve, regardless of students' race or ethnicity.³ Additionally, teachers of color frequently have larger amounts of student debt than their white peers as they are often the first in their families to attend college. By reducing barriers to entry into the profession, AB 843 can help to draw more teachers of color into the pipeline.

As classroom teachers, we have experienced firsthand the financial challenge of surviving on a beginning teacher's salary. And as our low-income students and students of color are the ones who are disproportionately hurt by our teacher shortages and a lack of diversity in the teaching profession, we need to do whatever we can to end this cycle. The relief provided by this tuition assistance can be the extra incentive some of our most talented Californians need to pursue a path into education.

While AB 843 is one piece of the puzzle, it is not sufficient on its own. While we appreciate that the author is proposing to target those LEAs identified for differentiated assistance because they are struggling the most, an influx of new teachers without additional support could only add to the challenges struggling districts face. We believe that for these efforts to recruit new teachers into struggling schools and districts must be coupled with an investment in ensuring that every new teacher has a high quality mentor through their induction process.

We are pleased to support AB 843 and hope to continue to work with the author to ensure it can reduce barriers for our best and brightest to enter and stay in the teaching profession.

If you have any questions about our position, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our names and email addresses are below.

Sincerely,



Sarah Lillis
Executive Director
Teach Plus California

² EdData: Education Data Partnership. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA>

³ Dee, T. (2004). Teachers, race and student achievement in a randomized experiment. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 195–210.



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CC: Members of the Assembly Higher Education Committee
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