

Jesse Welcomer
Senate Education Committee
Testimony Delivered in support of Assembly Bill 1835
July 29, 2020



Good morning, Chair Leyva and members. My name is Jessie Welcomer. I am a third grade teacher at *Montalvin Manor K-8 in West Contra Costa Unified* and a *Teach Plus California Policy Fellow*. I am here in support of AB 1835.

Nearly 90% of the students at my school are identified as economically disadvantaged and almost half are English Learners. I know firsthand the importance of additional resources and supportive adults to meet my students' unique needs.

Like teachers across the country, I taught remotely all spring, and like the vast majority of California districts, we will be remote again when school starts next month. Even though I got to see my students' faces light up every day during online class, remote teaching still took a significant toll on students' learning and wellbeing. And we've seen that these hardships fall disproportionately on the highest-need students. I'm thinking about those in my class who didn't have internet access when closures began, and my newcomer student who lost his in-school supports.

Back in February, the most pressing matter in our district was the nearly 48-million-dollar projected budget deficit that will eliminate educator positions and increase class sizes, among other impacts. Even before additional COVID-19-related costs, my district and others across the state already had tough choices to make.

As the state auditor found in her report, districts can treat any unspent supplemental and concentration funds in a given year as base funds the following year and can use them for general purposes. In this time more than ever, we must ensure that the grant money intended for disadvantaged groups of students actually benefits them.

The current school closures due to COVID-19 are affecting all schools and all students, but we know that the highest-need students will be disproportionately impacted. The state has a responsibility to do what it can to ensure that the most vulnerable students are not further disadvantaged when schools reopen.

LCFF ensures that LEAs have flexibility in how they choose to spend these funds. What should not be flexible is that these funds reach the students they were intended for.

I urge the State Legislature to pass AB 1835 to ensure that funds intended for disadvantaged students are used to improve services for them. My students can't afford for us to wait.