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February 28, 2024

Via Email ([vbilly@csba.org](mailto:vbilly@csba.org)) and U.S. Mail Delivery

Vernon Billy  
CEO and Executive Director  
California School Boards Association  
3251 Beacon Boulevard  
West Sacramento, CA 95691

**Re: Action by CSBA Board of Directors to Revoke CCBE's Status as a CSBA Section**

Dear Mr. Billy:

This letter is written at the unanimous request of our San Mateo County Board of Education to address our serious concerns with the action taken by CSBA's Board of Directors on November 29, 2023, to dismantle CCBE's longstanding structure by revoking its status as a "Section" of CSBA and directing that it be folded into CSBA as a new Region 14.

Our primary concerns are outlined herein, as well as our requests for follow-up and response from CSBA.

**1. Lack of Notice and Opportunity for Input on Proposed Action**

As elected County Board Trustees, we are accustomed to making decisions with wide impact, but whenever possible, we seek input from key stakeholders and conduct as much due diligence as possible to ensure that we are aware of the actual and potential ramifications of our decisions.

In this instance, CSBA's action was taken *without any prior notice* to our fifty-eight (58) County Boards of Education indicating CSBA's intention or purpose for such action.

Without notice, County Board Trustees were *not* afforded any opportunity to comment or to share valuable perspectives on the impact such an action would have. Our Board would have been willing to engage in discussions on this matter.

For reference, I first learned of CSBA's proposed action during Delegate Assembly *after* the CSBA Board of Directors had voted on the matter and given its Directors "talking points" to share with Delegates during our regional meetings.

When CSBA's action was shared at the CCBE Board of Directors Meeting at the AEC, the Board was asked *not to share* the information with fellow County Board Trustees (or anyone) until the CCBE General Membership Breakfast Meeting two (2) days later. I was in attendance as an observer at the CCBE Board of Directors Meeting and personally found this lack of transparency to be extremely concerning.

CSBA's talking points, which (again) were shared *after* the action was taken, as well as the eventual presentation to County Board Members of CSBA's Board action, primarily served to *justify* the action and to emphasize that it was *permitted* under CSBA's Bylaws. While the action may have been permissible, we believe that the lack of notice, transparency, and process involving County Board Members effectively weakens the foundation of the decision, even if it was technically permissible.

## **2. Lack of Understanding of the Roles and Responsibilities of County Boards**

The detrimental impact of CSBA's decision on our County Board's longstanding support structure and community of well-respected elected officials who have dedicated years to the development of County-specific resources and opportunities for deep connections between entire Boards, Trustees, and County Superintendents is immense and immeasurable.

This impact is further exacerbated by CSBA's lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of County Boards, which are almost entirely unique from the roles and responsibilities of LEA Boards, especially for the vast majority of our Counties with elected County Superintendents.

Our Board is keenly aware of CSBA's lack of current County-specific resources as we have recently engaged with CSBA for services including GAMUT Policy Plus and the Good Beginnings Workshop. In each instance, there was an *attempt* to *adapt* the resources from LEA language and roles to fit our County Board-specific needs, but the adaptation was not seamless, and as a result, the value of the services was (and continues to be) incomplete and diminished.

## **3. Lack of Commitment to the Trustee Handbook and County-Specific Conference and Training Sessions**

In an attempt to provide increased clarity for County Board Members concerning their roles and responsibilities, especially *vis-à-vis* the roles and responsibilities of



County Superintendents of Schools, CCBE spearheaded a revision to our Trustee Handbook (the “Handbook”) in partnership with the California County Superintendents and CSBA.

This was important work for our County Boards, and multiple members of *our* Board were dedicated to this project and spent months participating in its development.

For these reasons, we find CSBA’s *noncommittal* statements in its FAQ document regarding continued use of the Handbook – *by referring to it as “potentially valuable”* – to be unacceptable. Vesting sole discretion in CSBA as to how our County Boards will receive essential governance information disregards the time and effort invested into development of the Handbook as an essential resource for County Boards.

The Handbook, expertise, trainings, mentoring, and individualized supports for County Boards that have been provided by CCBE for decades are *irreplaceable* by CSBA, and the loss of these dedicated resources, specifically the County Board-only conferences and trainings, would be devastating for all County Board Trustees.

CCBE served a valuable and essential role for County Board development and professional training, and we are not convinced that CSBA is prepared to replace the level of support and commitment that we require. We implore CSBA to maintain the availability and distribution of the Handbook, and to allow for a robust training series and annual conference, which directly involves County Board Members in planning to ensure that the unique needs of County Boards are met.

#### **4. Request for Financial Transparency in Support of County Board Supports**

As of the end of fiscal year 2022-2023, CCBE’s Net Reserve Balance was \$137,344, and we request that CSBA confirm that this fund balance is accurate and will be allocated solely to County Board-only supports and programs.

Further, we hereby request confirmation of all proposed dues payable by our County Board under the new structure, with a direct comparison to dues paid in 2023, consistent with the following FAQ statements:

- (a) “Counties will continue to pay approximately the same amount of CCBE and CSBA dues.”
- (b) “CSBA will use the same dues calculation as CCBE. Dues will support the development and implementation of county board products and services and cover one program manager position dedicated to county board services.” See FAQs.

## **5. CCBE Made CSBA Stronger in its Support of County Boards of Education**

CSBA has expressed that “County board members are a valued component of CSBA’s membership,” and we believe that CSBA should respect our County-specific needs in fulfilling its stated “obligation to serve this segment of the membership with the same vigor as district board members.” See FAQs.

We do *not* agree that the “structure of CCBE as a section of CSBA operating as an independent organization within the association” was counter to alignment with CSBA’s governance structure, nor that CCBE “inhibit[ed] the ability of the association to foster a united, collaborative membership that’s collectively working to strengthen its mission, vision and strategic goals.” See FAQs.

CCBE’s leadership, programming and governance support for County Boards was the epitome of collaboration and its focus on preparing and supporting County Board Trustees in their work on behalf of students was unparalleled and firmly aligned with CSBA’s mission and vision.

CCBE made CSBA stronger in its support of County Boards, and until and unless CSBA’s supports for our County Boards are maintained, expanded, and bolstered, the loss of CCBE will continue to feel like the loss of a community that was dedicated to ensuring the effectiveness of County Board Members in our essential role for students in our County and throughout the State.

## **6. Requests for Follow-up and Response from CSBA**

As outlined above, we do not believe that CSBA properly engaged County Boards prior to its Board of Directors taking action to dismantle CCBE’s longstanding structure by revoking its status as a Section of CSBA and directing that it be folded into CSBA, nor do we believe that CSBA fully understands the importance of CCBE to County Board Members or the scope of supports provided to County Board Trustees over the past six decades.

Short of CSBA’s Board of Directors considering an action to rescind their November 29, 2023, decision to dismantle CCBE, we request that CSBA:

- (a) Maintain all County Board-only conferences and trainings, in recognition and respect of their critical importance in building connections and relationships between County Boards and investing in leadership and small-setting community building opportunities;
- (b) Commit to directly involving County Board Members as active participants in County Board-only conference and training planning, (1) to ensure that



the unique needs of County Boards are met and (2) to respect the longstanding, invaluable dedication of County Board Members in fostering leadership and building capacity by doing and learning, rather than through passive attendance at conferences and trainings;

- (c) Provide an outline of new CSBA supports for County Boards mirroring the lost CCBE supports for our consideration and feedback;
- (d) Provide an outline of developments in bolstering existing CSBA Services to better meet the needs of County Boards (including, but not limited to, GAMUT Policy Plus and Good Beginnings Workshops, *both of which our Board would be happy to provide specific feedback on*);
- (e) Confirm that \$137,344 (Net Reserve Balance End of FY 2023) remains in the CCBE Reserve Fund account and that these funds will be allocated to County Board-only supports;
- (f) Confirm all proposed dues payable by our County Board under the new structure, with a direct comparison to dues paid in 2023;
- (g) Maintain the availability and distribution of the Handbook; and
- (h) Create conditions of ongoing transparency, inclusivity, and engagement for all County Board Members to ensure that CSBA has the necessary input to support the full scope of unique County Board needs throughout the State.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. We look forward to receipt of your response to our requests.



Chelsea Bonini  
President, San Mateo County Board of Education

cc: Via Email Delivery

**CSBA Board of Directors**

Tyler Nelson  
David T. Gracia  
Renee Nash  
Alisa MacAvoy  
Jackie Wong  
Rachel Hurd

Christopher "Kit" Oase  
Roger Snyder  
Kathy Spate  
Sabrena Rodriguez  
William Farrism  
Susan Henry  
Karen Gray

Eleanor Evans  
Bruce Dennis  
Devon Conley  
Tanya Ortiz Franklin  
Nancy Smith  
Helen Hall  
Jan Baird

Chris Clark  
Christina Cameron-Otero  
Sylvia Leong  
Michael Teasdale  
Joaquin Rivera  
John McPherson

***CSBA Executive Committee***

Albert Gonzalez  
Bettye Lusk

Debra Schade  
Susan Markarian

***CSBA Region 14 Members (former CCBE Board of Directors)***

David Patterson  
Michelle de Werd  
Juliana Feriani  
Rachel Ulrich  
Marcy Masumoto  
Elizabeth Esquivel  
Brenda Duchi  
Annette Lewis  
Maimona Afzal Berta  
Shelton Yip  
David Patterson  
Monte Perez  
Rick Shea

Michael Teasdale  
Marcy Masumoto  
Janet Wohlgemuth  
John McPherson  
Peggy A. Cohen-Thompson  
Arleigh Dean Kidd  
Laura Mancha  
Mary Little  
Lucy M. Hendry  
Brenda Duchi  
Bruce Dennis  
Guadalupe Gonzalez

***County Board Transitional Working Group***

Robert Brown  
Harjit Singh  
Shelton Yip  
Juliana Feriani  
Bryan Burton  
Ramon Flores  
Victoria Chon

Peggy Cohen-Thompson  
Mike Walsh  
Bina Lefkovitz  
Aisha Knowles  
John McPherson  
Michael Teasdale  
Yvonne Chan

***California County Boards of Education, ATTN: Board President***

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Alpine County Board of Education  
Amador County Board of Education  
Butte County Board of Education  
Calaveras County Board of Education  
Colusa County Board of Education  
Contra Costa County Board of Education  
Del Norte County Board of Education  
El Dorado County Board of Education  
Fresno County Board of Education

Glenn County Board of Education  
Humboldt County Board of Education  
Imperial County Board of Education  
Inyo County Board of Education  
Kern County Board of Education  
Kings County Board of Education  
Lake County Board of Education  
Lassen County Board of Education  
Los Angeles County Board of Education  
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Marin County Board of Education  
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Merced County Board of Education  
Modoc County Board of Education  
Mono County Board of Education  
Monterey County Board of Education  
Napa County Board of Education  
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Plumas County Board of Education  
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San Diego County Board of Education  
San Francisco County Board of Education  
San Joaquin County Board of Education  
San Luis Obispo County Board of Education  
Santa Barbara County Board of Education  
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Shasta County Board of Education  
Sierra County Board of Education  
Siskiyou County Board of Education  
Solano County Board of Education  
Sonoma County Board of Education  
Stanislaus County Board of Education  
Sutter County Board of Education  
Tehama County Board of Education  
Trinity County Board of Education  
Tulare County Board of Education  
Tuolumne County Board of Education  
Ventura County Board of Education  
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