

Board of Education

Sergey Terebkov
Area 1

Andrew Tagg
Area 2

David Patterson, Ed.D.
Area 3

R. Jan Pinney
Area 4

Kelli Gnile
Area 5

Renee Regacho-Anaclerio, Ed.D.
Area 6

Lynn Oliver
Area 7

March 21, 2024

Via Email (agonzalez@csba.org) and U. S. Mail Delivery

Albert Gonzalez
CSBA Executive Committee, President
3251 Beacon Boulevard
West Sacramento, CA 95693

Dear CSBA President González,

This letter is written at the request of the Placer County Board of Education to express our very serious concerns with the action taken by CSBA's Board of Directors on November 29, 2023, to dismantle CCBE by revoking its status as a "Section" of CSBA.

We strongly object to both the manner as well as the substance of the action by the CSBA's Board of Directors. We also believe the actions harm CSBA's ability to serve its county board members and risks significantly harming CSBA's leadership role and standing.

Our concerns are similar to those expressed in the February 28, 2024 letter to CSBA from the San Mateo County Board of Education (a copy of which is attached) and include the following points.

Failure of Transparency, Process and Disrespect to its Members

The CSBA Board erased more than six decades of CCBE service to county board members within CSBA without any warning or notice to its county boards of education members. In our opinion there was no existential problem or crisis that required the CSBA Board to dissolve CCBE in secret, without any notice to its members, without notification or engagement of the Delegate Assembly, and without opportunities to discuss and collaboratively resolve whatever issues may have existed.

We recognize that the CSBA Board has the ability to amend its governance structure, however, the legal ability to take an action is not justification to do so in a fundamentally disrespectful manner to any of its members.

At the CCBE Board of Directors meeting on November 30, 2023 CSBA distributed a document titled "County Boards Services Frequently Asked Questions". In essence this undated document was the means CSBA used to notify California's fifty-eight county board of education that the CSBA Board of Directors had taken action in a private and closed meeting to dissolve CCBE.

The CSBA Board of Directors acted on November 27, 2023 to dismantle CCBE. Three months later there has been no formal communication explaining these actions nor the rationale for them to the fifty-eight county boards of education. In addition, there has been no formal communication from CSBA regarding the membership, responsibilities, and outreach activities of the CSBA staff appointed Transition Working Group.

Superintendent's Cabinet

Phillip J. Williams
Deputy County Superintendent

Martin Fregoso
Associate Superintendent
Business Services

Jennifer Hicks
Associate Superintendent
Educational Services

Susan Connolly
Assistant Superintendent
Student Services

Colleen Slattery, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Human Resources

Troy Tickle
Assistant Superintendent
SELPA

Michelle Eklund
Chief Communications Officer
Superintendent's Office

County Boards Need an Organization that Represents Their Interest – Not a Service Provider

The title of the CSBA document “County Boards Services Frequently Asked Questions” illustrates a clear challenge. County boards of education need to belong to an organization where they feel ownership; where their needs and interests are valued and where they are effectively represented and protected in the organization’s positions and actions. CCBE provided this vehicle within CSBA. What services are or are not provided are moot if the feeling of ownership does not exist. Throughout the CSBA document there is a focus on providing services that somehow will replace the many member driven services that CCBE has historically provided, but this document lacks any commitment to supporting ownership and agency for county boards.

Dismissive of Highly Valued CCBE Activities and Services

The FAQ fails to recognize the value members place on current CCBE activities and services. It speaks of “winding down activities” of highly valued events such as the CCBE annual Spring Governance Training and the highly successful annual conference. It is equally dismissive of the County Trustee Handbook and the support county board members need to fulfill their responsibilities – responsibilities that are significantly different than those of district trustees. The tone of the FAQ is also dismissive of the proper role of the members of the organization to express their needs, instead it is sending a message that “staff will be taking it under advisement...”.

CCBE Finances – County Board Member Dues Dedicated to and Directed by County Board Members

CCBE had a Net Reserve Balance of \$137,344 at the end of fiscal year 2022-23. These funds were paid by county boards and the reserve was created by CCBE for the benefit of county boards. We request that CSBA confirm that these funds are restricted to supporting county board only activities.

We have paid the additional dues to belong to CCBE because of the value we received and our participation in the decisions on how our dues would be spent through the governance structure of CCBE. The FAQ lacks any commitment or guarantee that county board members will have any role in determining how their dues will be used, and no commitment to transparency in the use of these funds.

SB-1380: CSBA Sponsoring of Legislation that Reduces County Boards’ Authority

A clear and recent example that calls into question CSBA’s commitment to protecting the authority of county boards is CSBA’s very formal and public step of sponsorship of SB 1380. It took this action without consulting or even informing its county board members. Members of our board found out about CSBA’s action by reading a newspaper article announcing the bill. CSBA as an organization has a fundamental obligation to work in the best interest of all its members. It should not pick and choose which members to advantage or disadvantage by its actions. Among other changes, SB 1380 proposes to restrict the authority of its members

who are county boards of education in fulfilling their responsibilities for charter schools for the benefit of other CSBA members, members of school districts. This provision needs to be eliminated.

Actions Requested

We believe the most appropriate action by the CSBA Board of Directors would be to rescind its November 29, 2023 decision to dismantle CCBE. If the CSBA Board of Directors does not take that action, we add our voice to the “Requests for Follow-up and Response from CSBA” made by the San Mateo County Board of Education in their February 28, 2024 letter. We request that you address the same issues their letter raises in your response to us as well as the additional issues we raised.

Thank you in advance for your prompt response to our concerns.

Lynn Oliver

Lynn Oliver, President
Placer County Board of Education

LO/kc

Attachment

cc: Via Email Delivery
Vernon Billy, Executive Director CSBA
CSBA Board of Directors
California County Boards of Education Presidents



Excellence and Equity in Education
Nancy Magee • County Superintendent of Schools

Board of Education
Susan Alvaro
Chelsea Bonini
Hector Camacho, Jr.
Jim Cannon
Beverly J. Gerard
Ted Lempert
Hugo Torres

February 28, 2024

Via Email (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
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