

April 23, 2024

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

Vernon Billy
CEO and Executive Director
California School Boards Association
3251 West 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 Diego County Board of Education (SDCBOE) to express our concerns with the action taken by the California School Boards Association's Board of Directors (CSBA) on Nov. 29, 2023, to dismantle the California County Boards of Education (CCBE) without any prior notice to CCBE members.

We join in all concerns expressed in the Feb. 28, 2024, letter to CSBA from the San Mateo County Board of Education (SMCBOE), along with the additional correspondence from many county offices of education board (County Board) colleagues across California, including and not limited to:

- Placer County Office of Education
- Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Alameda County Office of Education
- Riverside County Office of Education

We acknowledge CSBA's April 5 communication seeking to clarify and respond to CCBE concerns, including those raised by our County Board colleagues. In reviewing CSBA's correspondence, however, one common theme has emerged, and we wholeheartedly agree, "County trustees should have been consulted earlier..." (*CSBA Correspondence from Board President to California County Board of Education Trustees*, April 5, 2024.) Whether in its legislative efforts on Senate Bill 1380, or the abrupt action to dissolve CCBE, CSBA has recognized that it miscalculated the need for collaborative dialogue with CCBE leadership *before* taking key actions.

We further agree that CSBA “underestimated the amount of dialogue some county trustees may have needed to embrace this change.” (*Id.*) In SDCBOE’s estimation, the “amount of dialogue” necessary for County Board members to embrace the change was reasonable and easily achievable. CCBE leadership simply wished to work together and better understand CSBA’s rationale and approach *prior* to CSBA’s decision to dissolve CCBE. This was a key missed step. Without such critical dialogue, all CSBA’s efforts since that time are tainted and counterproductive, as the foundational decision driving all these changes was made without meaningful input from the CCBE membership.

Although CSBA has now addressed some issues identified in prior County Board letters, other key areas remain unresolved, including the following:

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

As our SMCBOE colleagues point out, CSBA’s action was taken without any prior notice to the 58 County Boards, barring all opportunities to provide comments or share perspectives *before* CSBA unilaterally moved to dissolve CCBE. The experienced CCBE leadership from our SDCBOE and other County Board colleagues could have provided essential historical, practical, and legal insights regarding CCBE’s formation, its separate bylaws and standing rules, and its irreplaceable and distinctive purpose within CSBA.

SDCBOE is further concerned by the unnecessary secrecy involved in this decision, including the CCBE president being asked to keep the news quiet for days after CSBA’s decision, and later presentation materials on the topic being pulled back by CSBA even after a good faith attempt to share out the information. Progress cannot be made behind the veil of secrecy, especially when key stakeholders were excluded from critical conversations before CSBA decided to dissolve CCBE.

CSBA’s April 5 correspondence did not provide any explanation for why CCBE leadership was not consulted, formally or informally, before CSBA decided to dissolve CCBE. As such, we have reiterated these points here for CSBA’s review and response.

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

Like many of our County Board colleagues, we too are concerned about the detrimental impact of CSBA’s decision on the longstanding support structure and influential leadership community offered by CCBE. For decades, CCBE has helped illuminate the unique and ever-evolving role of County Boards throughout California in developing training resources, policies, and legislation. Without a dedicated CCBE board, this knowledge will be diluted and drowned out as a small minority in Region 14 in the

huge expanse of CSBA.¹ The danger of CSBA's decision is particularly real as County Boards enter a critical period of change in 2024, faced with the following challenges, among many:

- Upcoming November 2024 election and need for transition guidance unique to County Boards and superintendents
- Looming changes and ongoing litigation regarding the County Board's role in charter oversight and approval/renewal process
- Statewide budget shifts and the essential insight needed for County Boards on their specialized funding and fiscal structures, which are incredibly different from our LEA partners

Due to the way CSBA unilaterally dissolved CCBE, County Board members now face an extended gap in any formal representation, given that the Region 14 replacement for CCBE will not exist until May 2024 at the earliest (assuming a successful delegate vote). More critically, County Board members will be without leadership for a full year given that CCBE was dissolved in Dec. 2023 and the final Region 14 Director and delegates will not be elected until Dec. 2024. This year-long gap in representation and functionality is severely detrimental to our County Board members and could have been totally avoided with proper consultation and planning with CCBE.

More specifically, CSBA's decision undermines the special independence County Boards must exercise in their statutory oversight roles and as unifying beacons for LEAs across each county. By dissolving CCBE and awkwardly shoving its membership into one of 14 CSBA regions, CSBA has ignored the critical yet collaborative autonomy of County Boards and their members. This unique identity was best illustrated and illuminated through the CCBE Handbook. Now there is great worry that the essential County Board governance guidance and countless hours of effort will be forever lost in this chaotic CSBA shuffle.

Further, given our commitment to continually improving our processes and procedures for the benefit of all students and our community, SDCBOE is also concerned that CSBA would pull back the critical support of CCBE needed in the ongoing GAMUT Policy Plus development of County Board-specific materials. By dissolving CCBE and diluting our decision-making power, the value of GAMUT Policy Plus will continue to decline for County Boards, forcing SDCOE to re-evaluate the cost-benefit of continuing with such a service.

CSBA's April 5 correspondence did not address the above points and we include them here for further CSBA review and consideration.

¹ We acknowledge CSBA's offered rationale against having a separate CCBE entity, however, this argument contradicts the original intent and purpose behind CCBE, as well as existing practice within CSBA. For example, the California Council of School Attorneys (CCSA) has long coexisted within CSBA despite having its own Board of Directors and initiatives, even though it is administered by CSBA. The same productive governance structure could and should remain in place for CCBE.

3. Request for Financial Transparency in Furtherance of County Board Programs and Supports

As with any non-profit entity, CSBA's financial accounting and protection of funds must be transparent and sound. We share in our County Board colleagues' request for the proper tracking and management of CCBE funds. This includes: (i) confirming that the estimated fund balance of \$137,344 is accurate and will be allocated solely to County Board-only supports and programs; (ii) confirmation of the preservation of funds and comparison to dues paid in 2023; and (iii) use of CCBE funds in furtherance of the development and implementation of County Board products and services, including one program manager dedicated to County Board services. We further join in the request for transparency and financial statements in accordance with the April 3, 2024, letter from the Riverside County Board of Education.

CSBA's April 5 correspondence did not provide the financial details requested by our County Board colleagues, so we reiterate the request for further detail from CSBA.

4. Proposed Resolutions

We therefore join with our County Board colleagues in the call for the following resolutions:

- We agree with our colleagues at the Placer County Office of Education that the most appropriate response would be for CSBA to fully rescind its Nov. 29, 2023, decision to dismantle CCBE. This would allow CSBA time to properly engage CCBE stakeholders in all current communications and the survey *BEFORE* taking final binding action. It will also help foster meaningful dialogue between CCBE representatives and CSBA so that any final decisions on CCBE's future can be taken with actual input and insights from our CCBE membership.
- If CSBA declines to rescind its action as requested, we ask CSBA to respond to SMCBOE's "Requests for Follow-Up and Response from CSBA" issued on Feb. 28, 2024, particularly the most urgent demands (as explained above) concerning the identification, preservation, and separation of any CCBE funds. Should we learn that these funds are potentially in jeopardy, we will have no choice but to pursue additional action to preserve valuable CCBE resources.
- Without the above key actions, the County Board members of CSBA will suffer irreparable harm. The collaborative progress made by our longstanding CCBE and CSBA partnership will be forever unwound. Sadly, if left unchecked, CSBA's current path on this matter will require SDCBOE to reconsider its relationship with CSBA, the cost-benefit of our CSBA membership, and evaluate the need for additional options, including but not limited to legal review, to avoid undue harm to our County Board members.

Letter to V. Billy

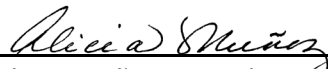
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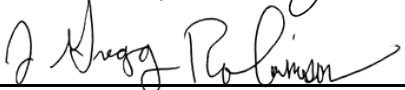
Thank you for your prompt attention to this correspondence. We look forward to CSBA's response on this important matter of statewide impact.

Sincerely,

San Diego County Board of Education



Alicia Muñoz, President




Dr. Gregg Robinson, Vice President



Paulette Donnellan, Board Member



Guadalupe González, Board Member



Rick Shea, Board Member

Cc: Via Email Delivery

CSBA Board of Directors

Tyler Nelson

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Renee Nash

Alisa MacAvoy

Jackie Wong

Rachel Hurd

Christopher "Kit" Oase

Roger Snyder

Kathy Spate

Sabrina Rodriguez

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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 Lusak
Debra Schaade
Susan Markarian

CSBA Region 14 Members (former CCBE Board of Directors)

David Patterson	Michael Teasdale
Michelle de Werd	Marcy Masumoto
Juliana Feriani	Janet Wohlgemuth
Rachel Ulrich	John McPherson
Marcy Masumoto	Peggy A. Cohen-Thompson
Elizabeth Esquivel	Arleigh Dean Kidd
Brenda Duchi	Laura Mancha
Annette Lewis	Mary Little
Maimona Afzal Berta	Lucy M. Hendry
Shelton Yip	Brenda Duchi
David Patterson	Bruce Dennis
Monte Perez	Guadalupe González
Rick Shea	

County Board Transitional Working Group

Robert Brown	Peggy Cohen-Thompson
Harjit Singh	Mike Walsh
Shelton Yip	Bina Lefkowitz
Juliana Feriani	Aisha Knowles
Bryan Burton	John McPherson
Ramon Flores	Michael Teasdale
Victoria Chon	Yvonne Chan

California County Boards of Education, ATTN: Board President

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

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