



# California Legislature

October 22, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol, First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond  
President, State Board of Education  
1430 N Street, Suite 5111  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Leveraging State Investment to Support Science Education**

Dear Governor Newsom and State Board President Darling-Hammond:

We write to ask you to restore funding for the statewide Exploratorium K-12 Science Leader Network. This evidence-based professional learning network has trained more than 800 teacher leaders who in turn have reached 80,000 teachers across grade levels, resulting in millions of California students receiving increased access to standards-aligned, phenomena-based science education. This year, the Exploratorium was poised to accelerate this work in order to reach 125,000 teachers by 2023. The state's modest investment of \$3.5 million a year has been matched by philanthropic contributions. Unfortunately, the 2020-21 budget eliminated the state funding.

The coronavirus pandemic has made evident the critical need for Californians to be informed and understand science. Since 2016, the Exploratorium has partnered with county offices, district leads, and teacher leaders who serve as local resources throughout the state, equipping educators with high quality, California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS)-aligned science resources for relevant and responsive science teaching. Through sustained and collaborative professional learning, the Exploratorium continues to expand the network of K–12 science leaders, investing in long-term, local capacity for inquiry-rich science education for *all* California students, focusing on increasing access and participation by students from underrepresented groups.

The impact of COVID-19 with the requirements for Californians to remain at home and the shift to distance learning imposes new demands for teaching and learning science. The majority of schools started the new academic year in distance learning with plans to move to hybrid in-person and distance learning programs when safe to do so. *Our deep concern is the loss of K-12 science instructional time and opportunities.* To respond to the immediate and urgent needs of professional learning providers, teacher leaders and teachers, the Network has pivoted and is providing on-line experiences that address the need for science content, model successful practices for online pedagogy and illuminate effective platforms for delivering online learning experiences.

To increase student participation and engagement and remain true to the instructional and pedagogical shifts called for by the CA NGSS, the Exploratorium K-12 team offers science educators intriguing phenomena, with simple materials, as a basis for exploring the science and engineering practices and generating opportunities for discourse and literacy development. The Exploratorium

has devised an array of approaches for providing high-quality “hands-on” investigations of phenomena: phenomena are featured on screen for direct interaction by the participant; phenomena are featured on screen by the presenter and participants give directions for manipulating the phenomena, so they can observe and investigate as a learner themselves; and phenomena are directly accessed by participants at home. These approaches serve as models for participants to use in their own online workshops and online classrooms and can be customized to meet the local and individual needs of learners.

The state’s investment to date has been of significant benefit to educators and students and we want to ensure these opportunities and benefits continue. This program reaches statewide and has a focus on including a diverse group of educators who work in schools with diverse student populations. The external evaluation of the Network shows that the training, support, and materials have lasting impact on teachers’ capacity. It is a trusted and valued resource. As part of its equity focus, 90% of the teachers and teacher leaders work in Title 1 schools and districts which enroll large numbers of students from low-income families.

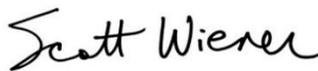
As the administration begins crafting the state budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, we urge you to leverage the past investment in science professional learning and restore the \$3.5 million in funding to the Exploratorium K-12 Science Leader Network.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



David Chiu  
Assemblymember, 17<sup>th</sup>  
District



Scott Wiener  
Senator, 11<sup>th</sup>  
District



Ian Calderon  
Assemblymember, 57<sup>th</sup>  
District



Anna Caballero  
Senator, 12<sup>th</sup>  
District



Wendy Carrillo  
Assemblymember, 51<sup>st</sup>  
District



Jerry Hill  
Senator, 13<sup>th</sup>  
District

Cottie Petrie-Norris  
Assemblymember, 74<sup>th</sup>  
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Susan Eggman  
Assemblymember, 13<sup>th</sup>  
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Melissa Hurtado  
Senator, 14<sup>th</sup>  
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Kansen Chu  
Assemblymember, 25<sup>th</sup>  
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Connie Leyva  
Senator, 20<sup>th</sup>  
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Laura Friedman  
Assemblymember, 43<sup>rd</sup>  
District

Richard Pan  
Senator, 6<sup>th</sup>  
District

Ed Chau  
Assemblymember, 49<sup>th</sup>  
District

Rudy Salas  
Assemblymember, 32<sup>nd</sup>  
District

Ben Hueso  
Senator, 40<sup>th</sup>  
District

Jacqui Irwin  
Assemblymember, 44<sup>th</sup>  
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Mike Gipson  
Assemblymember, 64<sup>th</sup>  
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Susan Rubio  
Senator, 22<sup>nd</sup>  
District

Nancy Skinner  
Senator, 9<sup>th</sup>  
District

Bill Quirk  
Assemblymember, 20<sup>th</sup>  
District

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Jessica Holmes, Assistant Program Budget Manager, Department of Finance  
Brooks Allen, Executive Director, State Board of Education  
Stephanie Gregson, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education