UNITE LA
Education Innovation Through Collaboration

2026 State Policy & Budget Priorities

Cradle-Through-Career Framework

UNITE-LA champions equitable economic mobility and well-being through collaboration that strengthens systems, policies and high-quality education and career pathways. UNITE-LA is committed to advancing cradle-through-career policies and investments that advance and strengthen these pathways, helping to disrupt cycles of inequality.

California is navigating state-level budget pressures, a shifting federal landscape and ongoing threats to social safety net programs. It is critical to protect and continue investments in systems that underpin California's long-term economic vitality and shared prosperity. We respectfully encourage the governor's administration and state legislature to elevate the following priorities in the 2026 Legislative Session.

Legislative Priorities

Early Care & Education (ECE)

- Advocate for **increased state-funded reimbursement rates** to ensure educators and child care providers receive the true cost of providing early care and education.
- Adopt **a reversion account for child care funds** not spent within one budget year to ensure funds appropriated for early care and education stay within the system. Funds within the reversion account will be reappropriated for ECE purposes.
- Protect and ensure implementation of the Governor's commitment to **add 200,000 additional child care spaces by 2028**.
- Support proposals aimed at **addressing infant-toddler program expansion** and the **workforce pathways into early care and education**.

TK-12

- Advocate for **expanded state funding to the California Student Aid Commission** to be dispersed to Regional Coordinating Organizations and the California Student Opportunity and Access Program. Expanded funding will support California's highest-need students—such as adult learners, English learners, foster and systems-involved youth, parenting students, unaccompanied minors, undocumented and mixed-status families, and unhoused youth—in receiving robust financial aid outreach, workshops and individualized support to access college.
- Increase investments to **support postsecondary advising for high schools** by hiring additional counselors and reduce student–counselor ratios.
- Support legislation and investments that **advance implementation of TK** to ensure a high-quality experience for children, families and educators.
- Support policies that **increase access to Dual Language Learner supports and programs**, as well as pathways for bilingual educators.

Legislative Priorities (Continued)

Higher Education

- **Elevate data-backed successes of the Statewide K-16 Collaborative Grant Program**, and increase funding to support long-term program sustainability.
- Increase **resources and supports for student parents and their children** to ensure success in higher education and beyond.
- Support California's **implementation of the new federally funded Short-Term Pell Grants** to ensure a rollout that prioritizes equity and meets student and workforce needs.
- Support **implementation of AB 1098 and SB 638**, which establish and outline the responsibilities of the California Education Interagency Council, a statewide coordinating entity that will foster communication among the state's higher education, social services and workforce development systems.

Immigration Policy and Protections

- Support efforts to **amend the California Dream Act application** to clarify and ensure that the application can be used by any student eligible for state financial aid programs, regardless of their eligibility for federal financial aid or immigration status.
- Ensure funding that supports implementation of legislation working to **protect students, families and educators** in education settings, including AB 49 and AB 495.
- Support additional funding allocation (at minimum $15 million annually over the next three years) for the **California Social Entrepreneurs for Economic Development (SEED) Initiative** which supports immigrant entrepreneurs across the state in starting, maintaining or scaling their small business.

Digital Access and Equity

- Advance measures that **ensure learners and workers have the digital infrastructure they need** to learn, work and thrive.
- **Maximize public investments in Los Angeles' digital equity efforts** through changes to the current California Public Utilities Commission – Advanced Services Fund to ensure sufficient funding is allocated to the region.

Workforce Development

- **Co-sponsor AB 805** to implement key recommendations uplifted by the California Youth Apprenticeship Committee, including employer engagement strategies that support work-based learning.
- Prioritize sustained and expanded funding for **long-term wildfire recovery and community resilience** in L.A., including affordable housing rebuilding, infrastructure restoration and economic stabilization programs.
- Protect and sustain **investments in Earn & Learn models**—such as paid internships, pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships—that provide opportunity youth with compensated, work-based learning experiences tied to industry-recognized credentials.
- Strengthen and expand **social safety nets** to ensure individuals and families in need have access to essential services that support their basic needs—including food, housing, health care and financial assistance—while actively connecting them to workforce development opportunities.
- Support additional funding for the **Educator Workforce Investment Grant (EWIG) program**, which provides opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals to experience professional learning opportunities, including those supporting the implementation of effective language acquisition programs for English Learner (EL) students.
- Support the implementation of the **2025 California Master Plan for Career Education**, which calls for all learners to have equitable access to pathways that connect education and work. This includes advocating for career-connected learning where experiences are designed to connect curriculum to real-world skills and knowledge.

For More Information:

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