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**Governor Signs Law to Address Overuse of Suspensions in California Schools**

*SB 419 will keep more students in school, increase student success and high school graduation rates*

Sacramento, Calif. – Today, Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation to eliminate suspensions for minor misbehaviors and protect California students from discriminatory and harmful school climates. Under Senate Bill 419, which was introduced by Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley), school districts will no longer be permitted to use defiance or disruption, as justification for suspending students through eighth grade. The new law will protect thousands of students from being pushed out of school; during the 2017-18 school year, more than 20,000 students in grades four through eight were suspended for defiance or disruption.

"SB 419 allows students to stay in class and further their education rather than be pulled out and fall behind on classwork," said Jonathan Calles, a youth leader with Brothers Sons Selves Coalition and senior at Garfield High School in Los Angeles Unified School District. "A student's education is supposed to be protected, not used as a threat against them. Because of SB 419, students who are deemed hard to deal with will no longer be thrown out of class or suspended because it's convenient. Rather, restorative justice practices will be implemented. Relationships, conversations, trust and a dialogue will be put in the place of punishments."

SB 419 will improve student outcomes and encourage schools to adopt alternatives to suspensions and expulsions by permanently eliminating defiance or disruption suspensions for students in grades 4-5, and eliminating defiance or disruption suspensions for students in grades 6-8 through July 1, 2025. SB 419 amends current Education Code to address the overuse of suspensions for minor and subjective misbehaviors. Since Education Code 48900 (k) is a broad and subjective catch-all category, students have been suspended for chewing gum, not paying attention, talking back, and wearing sweatpants. Many school districts, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Azusa, Oakland, Pasadena, and Washington Unified School Districts have already eliminated defiance or disruption as grounds for suspension for all grade levels, creating access to safer, healthier, and more positive learning environment for students.

"No student should be set back in their education for something as minor as chewing gum or talking in class," said Angela McNair Turner, Staff Attorney at Public Counsel. "SB 419 is a huge step forward in addressing equity in schools across the state and eliminating the school to prison pipeline for youth in grades K-8, but there are still nearly 19,000 students who were suspended for defiance in the 2017-2018 school year who will not have these protections. We will continue to advocate for their right to an education."

This category of suspensions has contributed to racial inequality in California schools. Black students, students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ students are disproportionately targeted with harsh discipline for common youth behaviors. Suspensions also cause California students to lose significant instruction time. A recent study revealed that students lost over 150,000 days of school due to defiance or disruption suspensions in 2016-17.

“This is not only a question of justice and equity for California’s students of color, who are disproportionately subject to disruption or defiance suspensions—it’s also a matter of sound administrative policy,” said Jackie Goldberg, Board Vice President of Los Angeles Unified School District. “SB 419 will result in less instructional days lost due to suspensions, improved academic outcomes and school climate, and it will lead to fewer students to drop out of school and enter the juvenile justice system.”

This new victory for advocates builds on Assembly Bill 420, which went into effect January 2015 and eliminated defiance and disruption both as grounds for suspending students in grades K-3 and as grounds for expelling students across all grade levels. Since AB 420 became law, suspensions of Black students for defiance/disruption has dropped by 70%. Furthermore, California has invested significant resources to help address the root causes of discipline issues for students, foster positive and healthy school climates, and keep students engaged in school.

“For decades, I’ve worked to protect the rights of workers, women, and communities of color. Ending the school-to-prison pipeline is the logical next step to fight against institutionalized injustice,” said Dolores Huerta, renowned civil rights activist, and President and Founder of the Dolores Huerta Foundation. “I strongly believe that SB 419 will bring justice to California youth by eliminating suspensions for disruption and defiance, putting an end to discriminatory discipline policies and instituting restorative justice practices. This will greatly increase positive academic outcomes for students and the communities in which they live. !Si Se Puede!”

SB 419 will go into effect on July 1, 2020.

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*SB 419 is sponsored by the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color/PolicyLink, Brothers Sons Selves Coalition, Children Now, Fix School Discipline Coalition, Lawyers’ Committee For Civil Rights of The San Francisco Bay Area, Mid-City Community Advocacy Network, and Public Counsel.*

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