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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
 LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

WARREN GUNNELS, MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR
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February 22, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Hon. Tony Thurmond
 Superintendent of Public Instruction
 California Department of Education
 1430 N Street
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Superintendent Thurmond:

On February 3, 2024, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that a school in California spent \$250,000 in federal taxpayer dollars on Woke Kindergarten, a non-profit that purports to be a “global, abolitionist early childhood ecosystem,” “to train teachers to confront white supremacy, disrupt racism and oppression and remove those barriers to learning,”¹ while the school’s math and reading scores are among the worst in the state.² This is extremely concerning. Congress does not appropriate funds to support schools so that activists can use them to train teachers to push a radical political agenda on young students. Accordingly, I write to request records related to the school’s contract with Woke Kindergarten, as well an update on the California Department of Education’s (CDE) compliance with federal law requiring that it approve and monitor school improvement plans for certain low-performing schools receiving federal financial support.

The reports regarding Woke Kindergarten are serious. Teachers at Glassbrook Elementary in Hayward, California, reportedly stated that the Woke Kindergarten program is “rooted in progressive politics and activism with anti-police, anti-capitalism and anti-Israel messages mixed in with the goal of making schools safe, joyful and supportive for all children.”³ For example, a teacher at Glassbrook told reporters that he “was told a primary objective of the program was to ‘disrupt whiteness’ in the school,” “that the sessions were ‘not a place to express white guilt,’” and that a Woke Kindergarten trainer used the phrase “so-called United States.”⁴ When the teacher asked what “disrupting whiteness” means for third-grade students, he said that he was banned from some of the training sessions.⁵ One of the educational materials posted on Woke Kindergarten’s

¹ Jill Tucker, This Bay Area school district spent \$250,000 on Woke K program. Test scores fell even further, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (Feb. 3, 2024), <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/woke-kindergarten-glassbrook-hayward-18635504.php>; WOKE KINDERGARTEN, <https://www.wokekindergarten.org/> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

² Jill Tucker, This Bay Area school district spent \$250,000 on Woke K program. Test scores fell even further, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (Feb. 3, 2024), <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/woke-kindergarten-glassbrook-hayward-18635504.php>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

website even asks, “if the United States defunded the Israeli military, how could this money be used to rebuild Palestine?”⁶

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), states are required to identify their lowest performing schools. Some of the low-performing schools designated as meeting the criteria for “comprehensive support and improvement” (CSI) are subject to increased monitoring and oversight and are also eligible for special federal funding reserved to support school improvement efforts. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, “Glassbrook has been on [California’s] Comprehensive School Improvement list since 2020, slightly improving in 2022 and then being reassigned to the lowest-performing level this school year.”⁷

It is unclear exactly which federal funding streams were used to pay for Woke Kindergarten’s work with Glassbrook; however, a July 27, 2022, Hayward Unified School District Board of Education meeting agenda specifically lists “Comprehensive Support and Improvement” as the “Name of Fund and/or Resource” for one proposed contract with Woke Kindergarten.⁸ Congress provided special federal financial support for certain schools under the ESEA in order to improve student outcomes, not to fund a progressive political agenda.

The ESEA also contains provisions that require schools to work with local administrators and district representatives to create CSI plans which must be approved, monitored, and periodically reviewed by state education officials.⁹ This means that if Glassbrook and Hayward District personnel included Woke Kindergarten in Glassbrook’s CSI plan, CDE officials should have reviewed, approved, and signed off on the use of Woke Kindergarten.

According to CDE’s website, local education agencies (LEAs) in California are required to submit “summaries” of their CSI plans and answer three “CSI prompts” in their Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP).¹⁰ A copy of the LCAP template available on CDE’s website prompts LEAs to provide:

- 1) “[a] list of the schools in the LEA that are eligible for comprehensive support and improvement;”
- 2) “[a] description of how the LEA has or will support its eligible schools in developing comprehensive support and improvement plans;” and
- 3) “[a] description of how the LEA will monitor and evaluate the plan to support student and school improvement.”¹¹

⁶ Woke Wonderings, WOKE KINDERGARTEN, <https://www.wokekindergarten.org/woke-wonderings> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

⁷ Jill Tucker, This Bay Area school district spent \$250,000 on Woke K program. Test scores fell even further, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (Feb. 3, 2024), <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/woke-kindergarten-glassbrook-hayward-18635504.php>.

⁸ School District signs one-month contract with ‘Woke Kindergarten’ consultant for \$20,000 to ‘disrupt whiteness,’ PARENTS DEFENDING EDUCATION, <https://defendinged.org/incidents/school-district-signs-one-month-contract-with-woke-kindergarten-consultant-for-20000-for-one-month-of-services-seeks-to-disrupt-whiteness/>.

⁹ ESEA Section 1111(d)(1)(B)(v-vi).

¹⁰ CSI COE Program Information, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/csicoeuginformation21.asp> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

¹¹ Adopted 2024-25 LCAP Template and Instructions, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lc/documents/adoptedlcaptemplate2024.docx> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

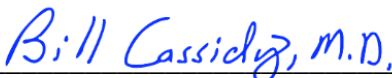
None of these prompts require the LEAs to submit school CSI plans to the state for approval. Although the CDE requires LEAs to complete School Plans for Student Achievement (SPSAs) to meet CSI planning requirements, there appears to be no requirement that they be submitted to CDE “unless the school is undergoing a Federal Program Monitoring (FPM) review or the subject of a complaint related to applicable state and federal program requirements.”¹²

It is unclear whether California has any supplementary processes in place to ensure that it is approving, monitoring, and periodically reviewing CSI plans as required by law. In order to better understand how the CDE conducts oversight of federal school improvement funds, please respond to the following questions, on a question-by-question basis, no later than March 7, 2024.

1. Does the CDE currently receive copies of all CSI plans created by schools within the State of California?
 - a. If yes, please explain the steps that the CDE takes to approve, monitor, and periodically review the plans, as required by ESEA Section 1111(d)(1)(B) (v-vi).
 - b. If no, please explain how the state fulfills its legal obligation to approve, monitor, and periodically review CSI plans.
2. Please produce copies of Glassbrook Elementary’s CSI plan, School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), and other related records, including Hayward Unified School District’s LCAP.
3. Did the CDE approve Glassbrook Elementary’s CSI plan? If yes, please provide the date that the plan was approved and all other monitoring activities completed by CDE related to Glassbrook’s use of school improvement funds.
4. Does the CDE know what sources of federal funding Hayward Unified School District used to pay for Woke Kindergarten? Please provide all related records.
5. Has CDE conducted an analysis to determine whether Woke Kindergarten meets the criteria for an evidence-based intervention under the ESEA? If so, please provide all related records. If not, why not?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions

¹² 2023-24 LCFF and Title I, Part A, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lc/crosswalk2023lcffttitle1.asp> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).