



March 28, 2006

Honorable Jack Scott
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Room 2082 State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Mervyn Dymally
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Room 3123, State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Denise Ducheny
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Room 4081, State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Hector De La Torre
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Room 4162, State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

On behalf of the California Association of School Psychologists, we wish to express our support for maintaining funding to the Early Mental Health Initiative (EMHI). Funds for EMHI are allocated from Proposition 98 and distributed by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) through matching grants to public schools. EMHI funded programs are a low-cost method of directly helping children become ready to learn. Under this program, the State awards grants to Local Education Agencies to implement early mental health intervention and prevention programs for students in K-grade 3. Schools that receive grants must also provide at least a 50 percent match to the funding provided by DMH. Schools use the funds to employ child aides who work with students to enhance the student's social and emotional development. Students must have parental permission to participate in the program. It serves children experiencing school adjustment issues who are not otherwise eligible for special education or county mental health services." The intervention provided by EMHI can have immediate impact on the child, the classroom, and the school environment. The long-range effects can last a lifetime. Maintaining a level of funding will ensure the continuity of critical support offered to elementary school children.

We truly appreciate the complexities in putting the budget together. We are supportive of the \$10 million provided in the Governor's budget and respectfully urge your support of an additional \$5 million to return the program to its original status as a \$15 million program. Full funding will allow for new grants to be issued as the program was originally designed, that will serve students in kindergarten through third grade.

Thank you for your consideration on this issue. If we can provide you with any additional information, do not hesitate Chris Kahn at (916) 446-3007.

Cordially,

Jim Russell
Chairperson, CASP Legislative Committee

Cc's: Members, Assembly and Senate Budget sub-Committees