

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

May 15, 2018

The Honorable Tom Torlakson
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Suite 5602
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

Dear Superintendent  Torlakson,

Many of my constituents are served by the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD), which educates over 6,500 homeless youth in San Diego, the third largest homeless student population in the state of California. I write to express my extreme disappointment with the way the California Department of Education (CDE) handled the grant application process for the Education for Homeless Youth Program. SDUSD's application was rejected apparently only because one signature was missing.

As you know, San Diego, and California broadly, is in the midst of a homelessness crisis. The federal government provides funding for the Education for Homeless Youth Program, which I have supported as a member of Congress. The program is administered by the state with the intent of helping homeless children struggling for education despite their difficult circumstances. This grant cycle, SDUSD officials were told their grant application "looked very solid and really good."¹ However, CDE rejected the application because one signature was missing. That signature had nothing to do with the merit of the proposal, and this purely technical omission could easily have been rectified without unfairness to the competitive process. Tossing the application for this minor reason is a draconian and unfair penalty – a penalty likely paid by the homeless students who deserved that support.

The purpose of the federal funding and the state competition is to reward the best application, not to punish the smallest mistake. That's exactly what happened here. I urge you to reconsider the way CDE examines applications and notifies applicants of their status. I would appreciate a response to the following questions:

- Does CDE contact districts with otherwise-promising applications to notify applicants if applications are incomplete?
- Does a missing signature on a grant application disqualify applicants for any other grant program?
- Is there anything SDUSD can do to apply for funds during this grant period (2018-2021) in the event that some awards are not fully utilized?

¹ <https://inewssource.org/2018/05/11/san-diego-unified-funding-homeless/>

SDUSD acknowledges that they made an honest mistake, but flat out denial of much-needed grant on this basis is a drastic penalty. I hope CDE will also reaffirm its commitment to all students, do the right thing, and reevaluate the grant application process.

Sincerely,



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

cc: Cindy Marten, Superintendent, San Diego Unified School District