

California State Senate



SENATOR

S. JOSEPH SIMITIAN

ELEVENTH SENATE DISTRICT

CAPITOL OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
(916) 651-4011
Fax (916) 323-4529

Senator.Simitian@sen.ca.gov

www.senatorsimitian.com

DISTRICT OFFICE
160 Town & Country Village
Palo Alto, CA 94301
(650) 688-6384
Fax (650) 688-6370

SATELLITE OFFICE
701 Ocean Street, Room 318A
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 425-0401
Fax (831) 425-5124

September 10, 2012

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 885 – Education Data Governance

Dear Governor Brown:

This letter is to respectfully request your signature on Senate Bill 885 relative to education data governance.

The Education Data and Information Act of 2008 (S.B. 1298, Simitian) established, among other things, a working group to explore various issues relating to the governance of cross-segment education data. The working group, led by the Legislative Analyst's Office, included bipartisan representation from the Assembly and Senate as well as representation from the Governor's office, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges, the University of California, and the California State University.

To inform its deliberations, the working group also invited the participation of an advisory group including teacher, school administrator, and school board associations; the Commission for Teacher Credentialing; California Postsecondary Education Commission; Cal-PASS; and other organizations, associations, and government entities. While the group did not reach consensus on specific implementation issues, it did reach consensus on overarching governance.

Governor Brown
September 10, 2012
Page 2

Senate Bill 885 takes the next step by implementing the working group's data governance recommendation by authorizing the various education segments and the Employment Development Department to enter into a joint powers agreement to facilitate planning and implementation of a longitudinally-linked education data system for California.

As you know, we don't yet have the information we need to assess the quality of state education policy and investments. This is the oft-repeated conclusion of our very best education policy research, including the "*Getting Down to Facts*," "*Students First*," and "*Closing the Achievement Gap*" reports, as well as a wide variety of education stakeholders.

Further, as a condition of receiving \$4.9 billion in ARRA State Fiscal Stabilization Funds, California committed to building a longitudinal data system that includes the ability to link P-20 (preschool through university and into the workforce) student-level education data.

This linkage was one of the required elements for the Race To The Top grant program. California scored among the lowest of forty-one other states in the area of "fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system" – only four other states received such a low score. Moreover, the Obama Administration has indicated that student-level comprehensive data systems will continue to be important in future rounds of federal education funding.

Much of the information about students in California's public education system is already collected and stored in many separate data systems. These data systems provide much useful information with respect to specific segments; however, there is a critical need to bring this information together in a manner that allows us to evaluate which programs improve student performance and which ones don't in order to spend our limited education dollars wisely.

Though progress has been made with CalPADS and Cal-PASS, these databases, standing alone, won't be able to tell us whether or not the kids we educate in California schools actually go on to get good jobs or if they succeed in college.

To really understand the success (or failure) of California schools we need to link P-12 data systems with data systems in other education segments – like higher

Governor Brown
September 10, 2012
Page 3

education – and with non-education data systems, such as those in our workforce and foster care systems.

The bill received near unanimous votes in both the Senate and Assembly and is supported by a broad coalition of organizations, including the Association of California School Administrators, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Children Now, the Little Hoover Commission, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, and Education Trust–West.

We have made significant progress on state education data systems over the last decade; now is not the time to stall out or forfeit progress. If anything, the difficult decisions that the budget crisis presents can only underscore the value of meaningful data to our policy and decision making processes.

To my knowledge, **there is no opposition to the bill.** I respectfully request your signature on Senate Bill 885.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Joseph Simitian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

S. Joseph Simitian
State Senator, Eleventh District

cc: Nancy McFadden, Executive Secretary
Gareth Elliott, Legislative Secretary
Cathy McBride, Deputy Legislative Secretary