

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2189 (Nguyen)

As Amended May 18, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires, contingent upon an appropriation, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (Council) to establish and administer a Statewide Special Education Parent Advocacy Collaborative for the purpose of building statewide capacity for parent and pupil engagement in special education advocacy, systems change, and policy development.

Major Provisions

- 1) Require that the grant be awarded through a competitive grant process and provide \$800,000 annually for three years, to an eligible nonprofit statewide advocacy organization, defined to mean an organization with demonstrated success representing the interests of families and persons with disabilities, through local or statewide forums. Authorize the State Council to retain an unspecified amount of the funding appropriated for the grant for administration.
- 2) Require the State Council to consider all of the following when awarding the grant:
 - a) Demonstrated experience in statewide special education advocacy for the purpose of systems advocacy, capacity building, and systems change;
 - b) Demonstrated experience in coalition building across diverse geographic regions and demographic groups;
 - c) Demonstrated experience and expertise in advocacy on behalf of the disability community; and,
 - d) Experience working with existing entities providing training and support to parents of pupils with disabilities, as specified.
- 3) Require that the grantee conduct outreach and training through meetings or forums for the purpose of providing parent leaders, student advocates, and other stakeholders, inclusive of postsecondary students, with culturally and linguistically responsive information regarding statewide special education advocacy for the purpose of systems advocacy, capacity building, and systems change.
- 4) Require the grantee to, at a minimum, do all of the following:
 - a) Identify and build a network of at least 200 leader stakeholders engaged in advocacy for students with disabilities;
 - b) Establish and facilitate a statewide collaborative of parents, pupils, and stakeholders, including identifying and supporting a cohort of approximately 40 to 50 parent and pupil leaders representing diverse geographic regions of the state;
 - c) Conduct not fewer than three convenings annually to provide training, build relationships, and coordinate statewide advocacy efforts;

- d) Develop and implement a statewide training program, including virtual and in-person opportunities, to build participant knowledge and skills;
 - e) Provide training and technical assistance designed to develop participant capacity in all of the following areas:
 - i) State-level advocacy and legislative engagement;
 - ii) Statewide communications, messaging, and public engagement;
 - iii) Sharing best practices in effective parent and pupil advocacy and leadership development;
 - iv) Coalition building and community organizing across regions;
 - v) Understanding of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and,
 - vi) Use of data, including pupil outcome data used for purposes of the California School Dashboard and the State Performance Plan, to inform advocacy and systems change.
 - f) Coordinate and collaborate with and leverage existing local, regional, and statewide parent and family support entities to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of services;
 - g) Collect, analyze, and document the experiences of parents and pupils to inform state-level policymaking, oversight, and systems improvement;
 - h) Be guided in the activities specified in this subdivision by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence's theory of action, including principles of continuous improvement, capacity building, and data-driven decision-making; and,
 - i) Report on the activities as required.
- 5) Require the grantee to submit an annual report to the State Council, and the State Council to submit a report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature that includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
- a) A description of activities conducted;
 - b) Outcomes of the activities required by this section, including but not limited to:
 - i) Increased participation of parents and pupils in statewide advocacy efforts;
 - ii) Improved coordination among parent and family support organizations; and,
 - iii) Increased capacity of participants to engage in systems-level advocacy.
 - c) The number, geographic distribution, and demographics of participants; and,
 - d) Recommendations for improving statewide special education advocacy and oversight.

6) Require that the report be made publicly available on the State Council's website.

COMMENTS

Background: *California State Council on Developmental Disabilities*. The State Council serves as an independent state agency to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports they need. For 2025-26, the State Council identified the following as policy priorities: 1) protecting and enhancing civil rights; 2) guaranteeing access to education and employment; 3) identifying & prioritizing emerging issues in the intellectual/developmental disability community; 4) promoting access to quality supports in the community; 5) ensuring safety in the community; and, 6) improving housing and community living.

Dismantlement of Access to Education and Supports. In 2024, the United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights received 22,687 complaints, which is an 18% increase from years prior. Complaints containing allegations of disability discrimination comprised 37% (8,457) of all complaints received.¹ According to a 2024 annual report by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, "overall staffing level has declined significantly – falling from nearly 1,100 FTE staff in [fiscal year] (FY) 1981 to 588 FTE staff in FY 2024. This reduction comes even as the volume of complaints received has grown significantly, increasing from under 3,000 in FY 1981 to 22,687 in FY 2024." Furthering the trend of reducing resources, the U.S. Department of Education announced on March 11, 2025, its plans to reduce 50% of its workforce through deferred resignation, voluntary separation, early retirement, and reduction-in-force, which was later upheld by the Supreme Court.²

In addition to the Office of Civil Rights, on October 10, 2025, 121 employees from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) were laid off, and seven remain within the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), housed within OSERS.³ OSEP monitors states and territories' compliance with IDEA, administers technical assistance to families, and monitors the rights of students with disabilities.

California's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Compliance. Each year, states report to the U.S. Secretary of Education in their Annual Performance Report on progress toward the measurable targets set in their State Performance Plan. The Part B (which serves students with disabilities, from 3 through 21 years of age) and Part C (which serves infants and toddlers birth through 2 years of age) State Performance Plans and Annual Performance Reports include indicators that track child and family outcomes as well as indicators that measure compliance with the requirements of the IDEA. The U.S. Department of Education then issues an annual determination for each state on its progress in meeting statutory requirements. These determinations support ongoing efforts to improve education for the nation's 7.5 million infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. IDEA details four categories for the Secretary's determinations. A state's determination may be:

1) Meets the requirements and purposes of IDEA;

¹ <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/ocr-report-president-and-secretary-of-education-2024-109012.pdf>

² <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force>

³ https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cand.457131/gov.uscourts.cand.457131.62.6_1.pdf

- 2) Needs assistance in implementing the requirements of IDEA;
- 3) Needs intervention in implementing the requirements of IDEA; or,
- 4) Needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of IDEA.

In 2025, for IDEA Part B, California was designated "Needs Assistance" for two or more consecutive years. And, for IDEA Part C, California, along with three other states, was designated "Needs Intervention." It is unclear how federal staffing and funding changes will impact how California will receive the assistance and intervention needed, as determined by the U.S. Department of Education.

Existing Support for Students with Disabilities in California. As required by federal and state law, the Advisory Commission on Special Education is an advisory body which provides recommendations and advice to the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the California Legislature, and the Governor on new or continuing areas of research, program development, and evaluation in special education. In 2025, the commission convened twice. The commission releases an annual report, with 2023-24 as the last report posted on its webpage. The report identified five goal areas: community schools, equity and innovation, student and family voice, emotional and behavioral health, and literacy.

The commission states, "During the past year, the [Advisory Commission on Special Education] has worked to increase the direct involvement of students and their families with the commission. These efforts are aligned with state policies and practices on the meaningful engagement of educational partners. This engagement has enlightened the commission on the most pressing needs of students and their families and helped to shape the commission's priorities."⁴

Further, the commission notes that FECs were created in "every area of the state." FECs serve parents and families of children and young adults with disabilities, between 3 and 22 years of age in California. Services available through each FEC vary based on the needs of the region they serve and are staffed primarily by parents, guardians, and family members of children and young adults with disabilities. They were designed to do the following:

- 1) Offer specialized training, peer-to-peer support, access to information, and resources and support with referrals and services.
- 2) Support parents to better understand their child's educational and developmental needs and serve as a resource to parents for the individual education program process.
- 3) Promote positive relationships and effective communication between parents and professionals responsible for providing educational and related services.
- 4) Collaborate with community-based, local, and state agencies serving children with disabilities.

⁴ <https://www.sipimpact.org/Publications/Advisory-Commission-on-Special-Education-ACSE-Reports/2023-2024/>

According to the Author

"With oversight and enforcement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) shifting onto the California Department of Education it is more important now than ever for California to develop a coordinated infrastructure that unifies and trains parent leaders statewide on how they can stand up for the rights of students with disabilities. As a mother of a child with special needs, I know firsthand how complex and overwhelming the special education system can be. Parents should not have to navigate it alone. [This bill] ensures families have access to training, support, and a coordinated voice so we can protect the rights of students with disabilities and help ensure the system is working for families."

Arguments in Support

According to the sponsors of the bill, the Arc of California, "What California lacks is a coordinated, statewide advocacy structure focused on systemic change. [This bill] is designed to fill this gap. Rather than duplicating individual advocacy efforts, the bill focuses on building a statewide coalition of leaders drawn from local networks across California who can engage in coordinated, systems-level advocacy.

"[This bill] would create the infrastructure to bring together approximately 40 to 50 highly engaged parents, self-advocates and other leaders with strong local influence. Through in-person summits and ongoing collaboration, this network would build trust, identify shared priorities, and receive training in community organizing and statewide advocacy. This model would allow local expertise to inform coordinated action at the state level."

Arguments in Opposition

According to the California Teachers Association, "CTA believes state oversight agencies are necessary for the operation of state mandated programs. The California State Council on Developmental Disabilities, a state agency, is being given the authority to award grants to outside organizations to conduct outreach and training for students and their families. There is no oversight or measurable accountability of these outside organizations. Currently, three County Offices of Education have the responsibility to do exactly what this bill intends to do: develop training and conduct outreach to communities to provide advocacy to special education students and their families. This bill is duplicative and redundant."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee on May 14, 2026:

One-time General Fund (GF) costs pressures of \$2.4 million over three years for the Council to establish the Collaborative and fund a grant to an eligible nonprofit statewide advocacy organization, including \$1.3 million for staffing, \$900,000 for organizing, training, and technical assistance, \$60,000 for digital infrastructure, communications and data collection, and \$150,000 for grant administration, evaluation and reporting.

This bill is contingent upon a GF appropriation for this purpose and specifies the Council may retain up to 5% of the grant funding for administrative purposes.

The author has submitted a state budget request for \$800,000 per year for the next three fiscal years to fund this effort.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

VOTES

ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 6-0-1

YES: Lee, Castillo, Calderon, Elhawary, Jackson, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Tangipa

ASM EDUCATION: 8-0-1

YES: Patel, Hoover, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Pellerin, Zbur

ABS, ABST OR NV: Alvarez

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

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