
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2189
Author: Nguyen
Version: May 18, 2026
Urgency: No
Consultant: Diana Dominguez
Hearing Date: June 15, 2026
Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Statewide Special Education Parent Advocacy Collaborative

SUMMARY

This bill would require the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) to award a competitive grant to an eligible nonprofit statewide advocacy organization. This bill would require the grantee to conduct outreach and training through meetings or forums to provide parent leaders and pupil advocates with information regarding statewide special education advocacy for the purpose of systems advocacy, capacity building, and systems change.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures that children with disabilities and the families of such children have access to a free appropriate public education and to improve educational results for children with disabilities. (*20 United States Code 1400 et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes the SCDD with authority independent of any single state service agency. Provides that the Council shall serve as an advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities and develop and implement the state plan in accordance with federal requirements, among other responsibilities. (*Welfare and Institutions Code 4520 and 4540*)

This Bill:

- 1) Makes findings and declarations, including the following:
 - a. The federal IDEA guarantees pupils with disabilities the right to a free, appropriate public education and related services designed to meet their unique needs.

- b. Effective implementation and enforcement of the IDEA requires meaningful engagement of parents, families, and pupils, including those transitioning to postsecondary education or adulthood.
 - c. Recent reductions in federal capacity to monitor and enforce the IDEA have diminished the capacity of the federal government to oversee compliance with the IDEA and heighten the importance of states' responsibility to ensure compliance and accountability.
 - d. California serves one of the largest populations of pupils with disabilities in the nation and has been identified as needing assistance or intervention in implementing IDEA requirements, underscoring the need for strengthened statewide oversight and support systems.
 - e. Existing parent support structures provide critical local-level support but are not charged with engaging in statewide systems-level advocacy and policy engagement.
- 2) States it is the intent of the Legislature to establish a statewide advocacy collaborative to engage parents of pupils with disabilities to build leadership capacity, coordinate statewide advocacy efforts, and engage in state policy processes, in order to improve outcomes for pupils with disabilities through systems change.
- 3) Defines the following terms, for purposes of this bill:
- a. "Advocacy" means activities that promote, support, or influence public policy, systems, or practices at the local, regional, or state level to improve outcomes for pupils with disabilities, including systems advocacy, capacity building, and systems change. "Advocacy" does not include representation of individual pupils in due process hearings or individualized education program disputes.
 - b. "Collaborative" means the Statewide Special Education Parent Advocacy Collaborative established pursuant to this bill.
 - c. "Council" means the SCDD.
 - d. "Grantee" means the selected nonprofit statewide advocacy organization.
 - e. "Parent" means both of the following:
 - i. A parent, guardian, or other family member responsible for the care or support of a pupil with a disability.
 - ii. An education rights holder of a pupil with a disability.
 - f. "Pupil with a disability" means an individual with a disability with a particular impairment described in Section 1401 of Title 20 of the United States Code, including infants, toddlers, children, youth, and individuals up to 21 years of age,

inclusive, and including those transitioning to postsecondary education or adulthood.

- g. “Statewide advocacy organization” means an organization with demonstrated success representing the interests of families and individuals with disabilities with particular impairments described in Section 1401 of Title 20 of the United States Code, through local or statewide forums.
- 4) Requires the SCDD to conduct a competitive grant process to award \$800,000 annually for three fiscal years to an eligible nonprofit statewide advocacy organization. Authorizes the SCDD to retain up to 5% of the grant funding for purposes of administering the grant.
- 5) Requires the grantee to conduct outreach and training through meetings or forums for the purpose of providing parent leaders, pupil 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.
- 6) Requires the grant to be awarded through a competitive process that includes a public solicitation of applications and an evaluation based on established criteria.
- 7) Requires the SCDD to consider all of the following in awarding the grant:
 - a. Demonstrated experience in statewide community organizing.
 - b. Demonstrated experience in coalition building across diverse geographic regions.
 - c. Demonstrated experience in advocacy on behalf of pupils with disabilities and their families.
 - d. Ability to coordinate with existing entities, including, but not limited to, the Family Empowerment Centers on Disability, the Early Start Family Resource Centers, community advisory committees, Parent Training and Information Centers, and local educational agencies.
- 8) Requires the grantee, at a minimum, to do all of the following:
 - a. Work with parents, pupils, family support entities, and stakeholders to identify key challenges and opportunities in state policy relating to improving outcomes for pupils with disabilities.
 - b. Identify and build a network of at least 200 leader stakeholders engaged in advocacy for pupils with disabilities.
 - c. 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 to build advocacy and leadership skills for state-level advocacy.

- d. Conduct not fewer than three convenings annually to provide training, build relationships, and coordinate statewide advocacy efforts.
 - e. Develop and implement a statewide training program, including virtual and in-person opportunities, to build participant knowledge and skills.
 - f. 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 and monitoring compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1400 et seq.).
 - vi. Use of data, including the California School Dashboard and the State Performance Plan, to inform advocacy and systems change.
 - g. Coordinate with and leverage existing local, regional, and statewide parent and family support structures to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of services.
 - h. Collect, analyze, and elevate the experiences of parents and pupils to inform state-level policymaking, oversight, and systems improvement.
- 9) Requires activities conducted pursuant to this bill to be guided by the California Collaborative for Education Excellence's theory of action, including principles of continuous improvement, capacity building, and data-driven decision-making.
- 10) Requires the grantee to establish measurable outcomes aligned with statewide accountability systems, including the California School Dashboard and the State Performance Plan. Requires the outcomes to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:
- a. Increased participation of parents and pupils in statewide advocacy efforts.
 - b. Improved coordination among parent and family support organizations.
 - c. Increased capacity of participants to engage in systems-level advocacy.
 - d. Contributions to improved outcomes for pupils with disabilities, as measured by relevant state indicators.
- 11) Requires the grantee to submit an annual report to the SCDD.

- 12) Requires the SCDD to submit a report, on or before December 31, 2030, to the Legislature and the Governor, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code, that includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
 - a. A description of activities conducted pursuant to this section.
 - b. The number and geographic distribution of participants.
 - c. Outcomes achieved, including alignment with the California School Dashboard and State Performance Plan indicators.
 - d. Recommendations for improving statewide special education advocacy and oversight.
- 13) Requires the SCDD report to be made publicly available on the council's internet website.
- 14) Provides that the implementation of this bill is contingent upon an appropriation in the annual Budget Act or another statute for these purposes.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee,

One-time General Fund (GF) costs of \$2.4 million over three years to 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 contains an \$800,000 annual GF appropriation for fiscal years 2027-28, 2028-29, and 2029-30 for this purpose and specifies the Council may retain an unspecified amount 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.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Bill:

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. AB 2189 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.”

State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD)

The SCDD is established under state and federal law as an independent state agency to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports they need. The SCDD works to achieve a person-centered and family-based system of individualized services, supports, and other assistance. The SCDD provides trainings for self-advocates, family members, and law enforcement; provides direct problem-solving assistance; and partners with community organizations to expand access to housing, education, employment, and safety; among other activities. The SCDD’s current state plan, which spans 2022 to 2026, includes three goals:

- Maintain and/or increase the number of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities that become strong self-advocates, peer trainers and community leaders.
- Lead in partnership with family/self-advocates and others to protect and enhance civil rights to improve community-based systems and be more fully inclusive and supportive of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families.
- Increase partnerships with and support of more people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families, so they know their rights and can advocate for and receive supports and services.¹

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

In 1975, President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), which is now known as the IDEA. This civil rights law guarantees access to a free appropriate public school education in the least restrictive environment to every child with a disability. According to the U.S. Department of Education, more than 8 million children with disabilities received special education and related services designed to meet their individual needs in 2022–23.² The IDEA was reauthorized by Congress in 2004 and most recently amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95) in 2015.

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for oversight of states’ implementation of the IDEA. States submit an Annual Performance Report on progress made toward measurable targets set in their State Performance Plan, which include indicators that track child and family outcomes and measure compliance with the requirements of the IDEA. Upon reviewing these reports, the Department issues an annual determination for each state, which may be one of the following: meets the requirements and purposes of the IDEA; needs assistance in implementing the requirements of the IDEA; needs intervention in implementing the requirements of the

¹ <https://scdd.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2025/08/2022-26-State-Plan-8.13.25-FINAL.pdf>

² <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>

IDEA; or needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of the IDEA. In 2025, for IDEA Part B, which serves students with disabilities from 3 through 21 years of age, California was determined as needing assistance. For IDEA Part C, which serves infants and toddlers birth through 2 years of age, California was determined as needing intervention.

On October 10, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education laid off 121 employees from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, resulting in seven employees who remain within the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).³ The OSEP monitors states' and territories' compliance with the IDEA, administers technical assistance to families, and monitors the rights of students with disabilities. These layoffs have diminished the OSEP's capacity to provide oversight of IDEA implementation, which risks weakening the protections under the Act for students with disabilities. Following the state's annual determinations, it is unclear how federal staffing and funding changes will impact how California will receive the assistance and intervention determined as necessary by the U.S. Department of Education. Without these staff, "there is no oversight to make sure all children with disabilities get the services they're entitled to."⁴ These staffing cuts reflect President Trump's executive order to close the U.S. Department of Education and return education authority to the states.⁵

Related/Prior Legislation:

AB 130 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 44, Statutes of 2021), a budget trailer bill, revised the statutes related to Family Empowerment Centers, including requiring the California Department of Education to award grants by March 1, 2022, to applicants in those of the 32 regions in the state that did not have a center and to give priority to certain applicants, increasing the minimum base rate for each center awarded a grant from \$150,000 to \$246,000 commencing on July 1, 2021.

COMMENTS

This bill seeks to empower parent leaders, pupil advocates, and other special education stakeholders by establishing a statewide special education parent advocacy collaborative. This bill would require the SCDD to conduct a competitive grant process to award an eligible nonprofit statewide advocacy organization with grant funding over three years to establish the collaborative. According to the bill sponsor, while local advocacy efforts exist at the individual and local/district level, such as assistance at Individualized Education Program meetings and creation of local priorities, the special education student and parent voice is not represented at the state level. However, other stakeholders, such as the Special Education Local Plan Areas and teachers unions are active in state special education policy discussions. According to the bill sponsor, the intent is for the three years of funding will establish a strong foundation for the collaborative, after which it will seek to be self-sustaining.

PRIOR VOTES

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

⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/13/nx-s1-5572489/trump-special-education-department-funding-layoffs-disabilities>

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/improving-education-outcomes-by-empowering-parents-states-and-communities/>

Assembly Floor:	75 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 0
Assembly Human Services Committee:	6 - 0

POSITIONS

Support:

The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration (Sponsor)
Parents for Change

Oppose:

None received

-- END --