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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 2189 **Hearing Date:** July 1, 2026  
**Author:** Nguyen  
**Version:** June 22, 2026  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Ian Johnson

**Subject:** Statewide Special Education Parent Advocacy Collaborative.

## SUMMARY

This bill establishes, contingent upon an appropriation, a three-year Statewide Special Education Parent Advocacy Collaborative administered by the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) to fund a nonprofit organization to build statewide parent leadership, systems advocacy, and policy engagement on behalf of pupils with disabilities.

## BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which guarantees eligible children with disabilities the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and related procedural safeguards.
- 2) Establishes the SCDD as an independent state agency responsible for advocating for individuals with developmental disabilities and implementing the federally required state plan.
- 3) Establishes the Advisory Commission on Special Education to advise the Governor, Legislature, State Board of Education, and Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding special education policy.
- 4) Requires each Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) to maintain a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to advise the SELPA on its local special education program and encourage parent participation.
- 5) Establishes Family Empowerment Centers on Disability (FECs) throughout California to provide information, training, peer support, referrals, and assistance to families of children and young adults with disabilities.
- 6) Establishes Early Start Family Resource Centers to provide information, training, and family support for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities.
- 7) Establishes federally funded Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) that assist families in understanding and exercising their rights under IDEA.

- 8) Establishes the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) to support continuous improvement through capacity building, technical assistance, and data-informed improvement strategies.

## ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Makes legislative findings regarding IDEA implementation and enforcement, recent reductions in federal oversight capacity, California's IDEA performance, the need for greater statewide parent engagement, and the role of systems advocacy in improving educational outcomes.
- 2) Establishes the Statewide Special Education Parent Advocacy Collaborative, administered by the SCDD.
- 3) Requires the SCDD to award an \$800,000 annual competitive grant for three fiscal years to a qualified nonprofit statewide advocacy organization and authorizes the council to retain up to five percent for grant administration.
- 4) Specifies eligibility criteria for the selected organization, including demonstrated experience with statewide community organizing, coalition building, disability advocacy, and coordinating with existing parent support organizations and educational entities.
- 5) Requires the grantee to identify statewide policy priorities affecting pupils with disabilities, build a statewide network of at least 200 advocacy leaders, develop a cohort of approximately 40-50 parent and pupil leaders, conduct at least three statewide convenings annually, provide statewide advocacy and leadership training, provide technical assistance on legislative advocacy, coalition building, IDEA compliance, communications, and data use, coordinate with existing parent support organizations to avoid duplication, and collect parent and pupil experiences to inform state policymaking.
- 6) Requires activities to be guided by the CCEE's theory of action.
- 7) Requires measurable outcomes related to parent participation, coordination among organizations, advocacy capacity, and pupil outcomes.
- 8) Requires annual reporting by the grantee and a final report by the SCDD to the Legislature and Governor by December 31, 2030.
- 9) Makes implementation contingent upon an appropriation.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for 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.”

- 2) ***The bill establishes a new statewide advocacy infrastructure, rather than expanding direct services to families.*** California already supports parents of pupils with disabilities through Family Empowerment Centers, Early Start Family Resource Centers, Parent Training and Information Centers, CACs, and the Advisory Commission on Special Education. Unlike those entities, this proposal is expressly designed to organize statewide advocacy, leadership development, and policy engagement rather than provide individual assistance or Individualized Education Program (IEP) support. The policy question is therefore not whether parents should receive support, but whether the state should create and fund a new statewide advocacy organization in addition to existing parent support structures.
- 3) ***The bill attempts to distinguish systems advocacy from individual representation, but the practical distinction may become blurred.*** The bill defines advocacy to exclude representation in due process hearings or individual IEP disputes, instead focusing on systems advocacy and policy change. Even so, many of the proposed activities, including training parents on IDEA compliance, collecting family experiences, and monitoring implementation, overlap with functions already performed by existing organizations and naturally arise from individual experiences within the special education system. As implemented, maintaining a clear distinction between systems advocacy and case-specific advocacy may prove challenging.
- 4) ***The bill relies on an outside nonprofit to perform a statewide public policy function.*** Rather than creating the collaborative within an education agency, the bill directs the SCDD to competitively select a nonprofit organization to organize statewide parent advocacy and help shape state-level policy discussions. While the bill includes reporting requirements and measurable outcomes, it also raises broader questions regarding the appropriate role of state-funded nonprofit advocacy organizations in influencing education policy and how success would ultimately be measured beyond participation metrics.
- 5) ***Federal uncertainty provides context for the proposal, but does not by itself establish the appropriate state response.*** The bill is premised in part on reduced federal oversight capacity under IDEA and California’s continued need for assistance in IDEA implementation. Those developments understandably prompt discussion about strengthening state-level accountability and parent engagement. The policy question before the Committee, however, is whether creating a statewide advocacy collaborative administered through a grant to a nonprofit organization is the most effective use of limited state resources, or whether strengthening existing accountability, oversight, or family support structures would better address those same concerns.

**SUPPORT**

The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration (sponsor)  
Association of Regional Center Agencies

**OPPOSITION**

None received

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