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April 20, 2017

*By electronic mail*

The Honorable Ben Allen  
Chair, Senate Education Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5072  
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: SB 533 (Portantino) – OPPOSE AS AMENDED,  
April 17, 2017**

Dear Senator Allen:

Public Advocates respectfully opposes SB 533 (Portantino), as amended on April 17, 2017. This bill authorizes the Governor to declare an “Urgent State of Need” in response to a teacher shortage in school districts for teacher shortage in specific subject areas or a shortage of teachers with an authorization to provide bilingual instruction to English Learners.

Public Advocates is a civil rights legal organization that has served as a key voice for educational equity and has fought for high-need students in California to have access to qualified educators. As co-lead counsel in *Williams v. California*, we sought to ensure that all students, particularly English learners, were taught by properly assigned teachers. We are a founding member of the Coalition for Teaching Quality, made up of over 100 local, state, and national organizations representing civil rights, disability, parent, student, and community groups. At the CTC, the State Board of Education, and the California Legislature, Public Advocates has pushed for multiple measures evaluation systems for California’s educators; comprehensive plans to ensure all students’ access to excellent educators; and for the reporting of data critical to informing sound teacher quality policies. As our state faces a daunting teacher shortage, we have advocated to maintain high standards for teacher preparation and for the state to take measures to attract and retain teachers, particularly to our highest-need schools.

In the *Williams* lawsuit, we complained that thousands of students were denied equal educational opportunity because their teachers were not fully credentialed, not properly assigned to the courses they were authorized to teach, or were not authorized to teach English Learners. The settlement legislation sets a minimum standard to be applied statewide and this standard is now one of the state’s priorities which

districts much address in their Local Control Accountability Plans. SB 533 will undermine these standards and will allow individuals lacking subject matter competence and demonstrated teaching expertise into a classroom with K-12 students who deserve a fully-credentialed teacher to meet state-adopted college and career academic content standards.

Public Advocates recognizes California's severe teacher shortage problem and has consistently supported legislation that promotes recruiting and retaining quality teachers and mitigates the impact of the shortage on high-needs students. At the same time, we strongly advocate for strong teacher preparation and professional development so that fully-credentialed educators are in the classrooms with their students. California has a constitutional obligation to provide a teacher workforce and that should be provided equitably.

SB 533 does not address the teacher retention issues central to California's teacher shortage such as uneven support for quality teacher working conditions, student loan debt-reduction, non-competitive salaries, and unequal access to state-mandated induction. These issues have been highlighted in recent recommendations by the Learning Policy Institute and Public Advocates has consistently supported these approaches. However, they do require funding.

Instead, SB 533 undermines California's teaching profession and violates the *Williams* standards established to protect our most vulnerable students. **Teacher shortages disproportionately impact low-income, English learner, and students of color:**<sup>1</sup>

- Teachers in high-minority schools are nearly *three times* as likely to be teaching on an emergency-style credential than teachers in low-minority schools.
- Teachers with substandard credentials in high-poverty schools are *twice* as common as in low-poverty schools.
- 83% of districts serving the most ELs report having shortages, whereas 64% of districts with the fewest ELs report having shortages.

SB 533 does not remedy the underlying causes of the teacher shortage nor its harmful impacts on students in a way that ensures the state's minimum standards. For these reasons, we oppose SB 533. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about our position.

Sincerely,



Liz Guillen  
Director of Legislative & Community Affairs  
(916) 803-5596 – cell

Cc: Senate Education Committee  
Senator Anthony Portantino

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<sup>1</sup> See Podolsky, A. and Sutchter, L. *California Teacher Shortages: A Persistent Problem*, at 12. Nov. 2016. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.