

My name is Weldon Bradstreet, I am a co-chairperson of the BSEP Planning and Oversight Committee, also known as the P&O Committee. I am here tonight to present the P&O Committee's comments to the Board on the current round of BUSD General Fund budget cuts for the 2019-2020 school year.

As you know, BSEP is the Berkeley Schools Excellence Program, our city-wide special tax measure. On behalf of the P&O Committee, I'd like to again thank the voters of Berkeley for their generous support of our public schools, approving this measure in 2016 with a record 88.9 percent of the vote. This support provides \$30 million per year to our schools, which is 20% of the entire district budget.

Our district would look very different without the programs that BSEP supports. Thanks to BSEP, we have smaller class sizes, wonderful libraries in every school, a strong music program, funds for professional development and program evaluation, instructional technology, counseling and other supports for struggling students, and much more. BSEP also provides \$3 million dollars among our 17 schools that each site can spend on programs that best help students learn and grow.

If it were not for the funds provided by BSEP, our district would be in dire straits, and yet it's still not enough to meet the needs of our students and our staff. There is still a huge shortfall of state funding that has plagued our schools ever since Prop 13 decimated funding for public education. So as a District, we are once again facing painful reductions to the General Fund. I'd like to repeat and underscore that the necessity for these budget cuts comes primarily from the failure of the State of California to adequately fund our public schools.

I want to speak now about the relationship between BSEP and the General Fund, because you have on tonight's agenda, and on future agendas,

proposals for the use of BSEP funds that include significant additions in costs to BSEP in order to accommodate the cuts to the General Fund.

Over the years, the funding for certain programs has cycled between the General Fund and BSEP, as is permissible, depending on which resource had available funds for a specific purpose. In the case of BSEP, the funds depend on the the rates charged for local tax revenues, and in the case of the General Fund, it depends upon decisions made at the State level. These resources must work hand-in-hand to fund the best possible educational experience for Berkeley students.

The P&O's Oversight duties include ensuring that proposed expenditures fit within the legal parameters of the BSEP Measure, which restricts how funds can be expended. So while BSEP does provide our district with more per-pupil funding than many surrounding districts, the additional dollars are connected to specific purposes that are mandated by the terms of the BSEP Measure, such as paying for the additional teaching staff necessary to maintain smaller class sizes. That means, by the way, that this year BSEP will pay for over 130 additional classroom teachers, - that's one-third of our teaching staff - to keep our elementaries staffed at 23:1 school-wide and 28:1 in secondary district-wide, at a charge to BSEP of \$14 million dollars. These class size reduction dollars cannot be diverted to other purposes.

The P&O also has a Planning role that involves looking at sustainability for the life of the 8 year measure. There are many variables to consider, including changing tax rates, varying enrollment, and fluctuating State education budgets, all of which can be difficult to predict. We know that expenses are likely to increase; we just don't know by exactly how much. So you may have noted that BSEP currently maintains fund balances, particularly in the largest resource, the one called High Quality Instruction, which pays for so many of our teachers. The existence of those fund balances is an intended feature of the current BSEP Measure - to avoid

running out of money during the Measure's later years, which has happened in the past. The P&O and Board must act as stewards of the funds and of the fund balances.

The P&O Committee has been thoughtful and careful in reviewing the additional positions, programs and projected costs that have been proposed to be funded by BSEP, including those on tonight's agenda, with still more BSEP budgets coming this spring. We know that the Board will also be thoughtful and careful when authorizing the use of BSEP resources, always balancing the need to support our students and staff in the present with the need for careful stewardship and appropriate use of the funds entrusted to us by taxpayers.

Again we thank the voters of Berkeley for providing crucial support to our schools, and we strongly urge continued advocacy at the State level so that the support for our vital programs and compensation for our hard-working staff is based not just on local resources but on equitable and full funding from the State.

Thank you.