

SUPPORT AB 680 (CHAN): ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Active and involved parents contribute to successful student performance and school participation. Language barriers prevent communication between parents and educators about important matters such as academic performance, school programs and services, standardized testing, and disciplinary codes, resulting in a detrimental impact on students' success in education. Knowing the critical role that education plays in the development of productive Californians, parents need to be involved in this important process.

Existing Statutes Promote the Importance of Parental Involvement

- Current state statute requires schools to translate written notices and records when at least 15 percent of the student population speaks a particular language other than English.
- The federal No Child Left Behind Act also emphasizes and prioritizes the importance of translated materials to involve and engage parents in their children's educational schooling.

Documents Provided to Parents Convey Critical Information

- In California, one in four children – or nearly 1.6 million students – in the K-12 educational system is an English Learner, and virtually all these children come from homes where English is not the primary language. The top primary languages spoken by English Learner students are Spanish, Vietnamese, Hmong, Cantonese, Tagalog, and Korean.
- Many parents needing language assistance are learning English; however, it often takes years of study to become proficient in the language. Parents need to understand information that is provided in written documents concerning the well-being of their children. Notices provide information on important topics, including testing results, report cards, suspension/expulsion issues, and health needs.

AB 680 (Chan) Improves Meaningful Parental Involvement

Although existing statutes outline requirements for translations of documents, there is currently no systemic review and monitoring of this provision. A recent survey of the California Department of Education (CDE) and ten school districts found that a number of districts are unaware of their obligations or otherwise fail to translate critical documents for parents, resulting in parents being unable to take an active role in furthering their children's potential.

AB 680 (Chan) uses cost-effective approaches for strengthening compliance with existing law by:

- Requiring CDE to monitor schools and school districts for their translations of written materials through the existing state review process
- Requiring CDE to inform schools if they are impacted by these requirements

Supporters of the legislation include California Teachers Association, California Commission on the Status of Women, Californians Together, National Council of La Raza, and Public Advocates.