



Value. Teach. Celebrate. Serve.

February 8, 2009

The Honorable Tony Mendoza
State Capitol Building, Room 2188
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblyman Mendoza,

The Governor recently proposed diverting 50 percent of local funding for children's programs in our community. Down Syndrome Foundation currently operates a program that relies on these funds in Orange County. The funds are voter approved resources, Proposition 10, designed to meet the needs of children under age 5 in local communities.

The Learning Program, developed and operated with Prop 10 funding, is an early intervention that teaches children with Down syndrome to read (a largely unknown relative strength of people with Down syndrome). Many of those in our program enter kindergarten able to read better than their typical peers. This "head start" helps integrate children with Down syndrome into the classroom, providing badly needed support to an under-served population. The program supplements traditionally available early intervention services, and helps these young students reach heights many thought impossible ten years ago. Indeed, this program has been so successful that it now serves as a national model for cognitive intervention and is being replicated by Down syndrome groups in Florida, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas and Virginia.

While we understand the need to responsibly balance the state budget, we strongly oppose it being done at the expense of our educationally under-served children. The programs funded by Proposition 10, including The Learning Program described in this letter, fill gaps in the system and provide critical services otherwise not offered. The needs of many of the children served by Proposition 10 funding would go neglected or be greatly diminished if these local funds were eliminated.

We know you share our concern and commitment to the children of California. Therefore we urge you to oppose any attempt to eliminate or divert Proposition 10 funding at the local level. If you have any questions about our program or how important Prop 10 funding is to its survival, please feel free to contact me directly at dhalle@dsfoc.org.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concern and for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana L. Halle".

Dana Halle
Executive Director
Down Syndrome Foundation of Orange County

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