



Youth for Neurodiversity Inc.

August 05, 2026

The Honorable Sabrina Cervantes
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 7330
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT for AB 2526 (Muratsuchi): Special education local plan areas: apportionments: alternate assessments.

Dear Chair Cervantes and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of Youth for Neurodiversity Inc. (YND), I am writing to express our strong support for AB 2526, which expands the existing special education funding in critical ways to support neurodivergent students with significant support needs.

AB 2526 expands funding for Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) so that neurodivergent students who take alternate assessments are also counted, not only students with low-incidence conditions of hearing, vision, or orthopedic impairment. Secondly, the bill adds a new special education grant to the Local Control Funding Formula so districts and charter schools would receive extra funding based on the percentage of their students who have the most significant support needs, and the bill requires that this funding prioritizes early intervention.

Youth for Neurodiversity Inc. is a California-based, youth-led international nonprofit dedicated to empowering neurodivergent youth, advancing strengths-based neurodiversity, inclusion, and youth mental health. Our network includes more than 70 student leaders and allies with a growing focus on the experiences of neurodivergent girls who present differently while still requiring intensive supports.

We support AB 2526 because many of our neurodivergent peers, particularly those with significant cognitive differences, autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dysgraphia, or complex communication needs, are among those who take California's alternate assessments. They often need intensive, individualized supports, yet the current funding system does not fully account for the true cost of serving them. As a result, schools frequently divert money from other programs, putting strain on critical student programs.

Research shows that students with significant support needs have better academic, social, and long-term outcomes when they receive timely, well-funded early intervention and specialized instruction.¹ Under-resourced systems contribute to higher rates of isolation, unmet needs, and mental health challenges. Neurodivergent teens experience roughly twice the emotional burden from everyday school stressors compared to their neurotypical peers, with disproportionately high rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness.² By including students who take alternate assessments and by creating dedicated funding that prioritizes early intervention, AB 2526 takes a meaningful step toward closing these gaps.

For these reasons, Youth for Neurodiversity respectfully urges the Senate Appropriations Committee to support AB 2526 and advance it toward passage. California has an opportunity to strengthen special education funding and be the nation's leading example in championing neurodivergent student educational success such that they can access the services, belonging, and opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for your leadership on student health and success. We would be pleased to provide additional student perspectives or testimony in support of this bill as needed. I can be reached at info@youthfornd.org.

Sincerely,

Aashna Parsa

Aashna Parsa
Founder and President
Youth for Neurodiversity Inc.

¹ Stingone, J.A., McVeigh, K.H., & Lednyak, L. (2026). Early intervention developmental programming and childhood academic outcomes. *JAMA Network Open*, 9(2), e2555890. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.55890>

² King's College London, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience. (2025). Neurodivergent adolescents experience twice the emotional burden at school compared to their neurotypical peers. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/emotional-burden-at-school>

