



September 23, 2024

Mr. Ben Chida  
Governor's Council for Career Education  
C/O Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Chida,

The California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (CCEPD) advances policies that promote the employment of people with disabilities in the state. With diverse representation, the CCEPD provides a forum for state departments, the business community, and others to develop better state program coordination to increase employment goals for people with disabilities.

The CCEPD has provided previous input on the Master Plan for Career Education through engagement sessions for the plan and commends the efforts of the Governor's Council for Career Education. We appreciate the vision for equity in the Master Plan for Career Education for all students, including students with disabilities. However, upon review of the Community Input and Considerations Report, the CCEPD encourages additional focus on students with disabilities and strategies to ensure these students are included in career education and training pathways.

Career education programs are the building blocks to skill attainment, allowing for entry into various career pathways based on a person's interest and needed skills. True success in these programs also requires ensuring students make their own pathway choices. Inclusion of students with disabilities in these programs is essential to improving employment outcomes thus decreasing reliance on benefits, escaping a life of poverty, and promoting a life of independence.

The CCEPD believes the following additional recommendations for inclusion in the Master Plan for Career Education will improve career education opportunities for students with disabilities.

- **Improved system alignment:** The CCEPD recommends the plan describe how various entities within education, such as Special Education Local Plan Areas, Local Educational Agencies, and Disabled Student Services Programs--and entities such as Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Independent Living Centers, and local workforce development boards--can be aligned to assist students with disabilities in career education programs, work to educate businesses, and provide professional development content for teachers related to their students with disabilities.
- **Improved outreach for inclusion:** Career education programs can use existing processes such as individual education plans and 504 plans to improve access to students with disabilities. This will require adequate training for teachers and staff, including transition specialists, on disability culture and competency regarding working with students with disabilities. Career education data should also include demographics on disability to ensure students with disabilities are included in these programs.
- **Improved work-based learning opportunities:** The CCEPD believes students with disabilities should have access to work-based learning opportunities they choose. Programs must guarantee access and accommodations, including access to assistive technologies, to help reduce barriers and ensure students with disabilities are included in these opportunities. Oftentimes, students with disabilities in special education are not included in these types of programs. We need to engage students with disabilities at younger ages to develop career interests of their choosing.
- **Improved access to benefits planning and financial literacy:** Students with disabilities should be expected to pursue employment following their education. However, if the student with disability or their family are on cash benefits from Supplemental Security Income and/or Social Security Disability Insurance, they can be penalized with an overpayment from the Social Security Administration if they do not understand how work incentives are maintained. Both marketing and outreach materials should be provided to increase awareness of work incentives and information on how to access benefits planners, if needed. This should also include general financial literacy and happen early, long before any employment. The

CCEPD commends the work to improve co-enrollment in financial and public benefits programs. Any income and asset limits for various public benefits should be clear and understandable to avoid overpayments and issues while an individual is training for employment.

The CCEPD believes these recommendations, focused on system alignment, outreach, work-based learning, and benefits planning that incentivizes work, will build career education program capacity to serve students with disabilities. These improvements will ultimately increase employment opportunities and decrease the chances of a life in poverty.

We look forward to ongoing collaborative efforts with the Governor's Council for Career Education regarding students with disabilities. We commend the work on the Master Plan on Career Education and bringing a more strategic outlook to career education. If you have questions, or would like to discuss the CCEPD's comments, please call Maria Aliferis-Gjerde, the Executive Officer of the CCEPD, at (916) 558-5698.

Sincerely,

Taylor Winchell  
Chair, CCEPD

cc: Nancy Farias  
Director, Employment Development Department

Joe Xavier  
Director, Department of Rehabilitation

Department Designees to CCEPD