



OUR RIGHT TO RESOURCES

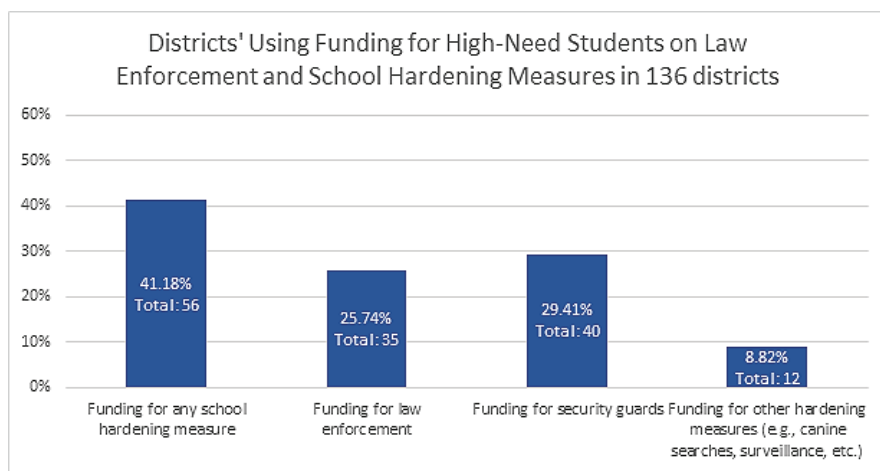
SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE CHEATING HIGH-NEED STUDENTS BY FUNDING LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2019, youth leaders at Gente Organizada ran a campaign that convinced their school district to stop spending funds on law enforcement and security guards and to reinvest them in additional counselors. Building on that work, in March 2020, Gente Organizada, Public Advocates, and the ACLU of California released a report: *Our Right to Resources: School Districts are Cheating High-Need Students by Funding Law Enforcement*. The report looked at spending by all 136 school districts in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties and found that more than 40% of the districts were illegally spending funds meant for high-need students – foster youth, English learners, and low-income students (“high-need students”) – on law enforcement or other school hardening measures.

California provides school districts with additional funding known as supplemental and concentration funds (“S&C funds”). Districts must use S&C funds to support high-need students specifically. School districts cannot spend these funds on law enforcement and security because:

- Law enforcement does not help students, especially high-need students. Numerous studies and district data show that such spending does not improve school climate and student engagement, and, in fact, actually pushes out, criminalizes, and otherwise harms high-need students and students of color.
- Spending on law enforcement and other districtwide hardening measures are not designed to meet the particular needs of high-need students, as the law requires.

The study found widespread misuse of funds for high-need students; more than 40% of the 136 school districts reviewed illegally spend S&C funds on law enforcement or other school hardening measures.



- 41% (56) of the school districts spend S&C funds on at least one hardening measure
- 26% (35) of the school districts spend S&C funds on law enforcement
- 29% (40) of the school districts spend S&C funds on guards and other non-police security personnel
- 9% (12) of the school districts spend S&C funds on school hardening measures such as drug sniffing dogs, metal detectors, and surveillance, amongst others

ADDITIONAL REPORT FINDINGS

- Districts that illegally spend S&C funds on law enforcement and other hardening measures have higher concentrations of high-need students and students from over-policed and under-resourced racial & ethnic groups, including Black, Latinx, Native American, Filipino, and Pacific Islander groups.

A review of school staff data also revealed extremely high ratios for health and mental health positions in the 136 districts:

- 60% (81) of the districts reviewed had student to school counselor ratios exceeding 500:1, double the recommended ratio
- 85% (115) lacked any school social workers and no district met the recommended ratio of 250:1
- 99% (135) had student to school nurse ratios that exceeded 1000:1; the recommended ratio is 750:1
- 50% (68) had student to school psychologist ratios that exceeded 1000:1, which is double the recommended ratio for schools serving more high-need students



TO SERVE ALL STUDENTS AND ESPECIALLY HIGH-NEED STUDENTS EFFECTIVELY, MEANINGFUL ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN AT THE STATE, COUNTY, AND LOCAL LEVELS.

Rather than invest in law enforcement and other hardening measures, school districts should invest S&C funds in resources proven to provide particularized benefits for high-need students, including:

- School-based health and mental health resources such as school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses, who support high-need students that disproportionately experience trauma, depression, and anxiety, thereby improving student engagement and achievement.
- Restorative justice, which creates a connected, inclusive school climate and provides an effective alternative to punitive discipline that closes opportunity and discipline gaps for high-need students.
- Positive behavior interventions and supports ("PBIS"), which provides school staff with systems and procedures that create a positive school environment where students can develop the social, emotional, and academic skills needed to succeed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- State policymakers should make clear that school districts should not use education funding on law enforcement because it has not been shown to be effective and is harmful for students.
- County Offices of Education should fulfill their obligation to hold districts accountable and reject LCAPs that include S&C spending on law enforcement and security.
- School districts should not spend any education funding on law enforcement or other school hardening measures and should seek community input when determining what alternative supports and services they should fund.
- Parents, students, and community members should determine whether their school districts are illegally spending money and advocate for their district to divest from law enforcement and re-invest in evidence-based, effective supports such as those described above. They can find tools to support their efforts here:

aclusocal.org/righttoresources
publicadvocates.org/righttoresources