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Gov. Newsom kicks off California Comeback Plan proposal with announcement of stimulus payments

Gov. Gavin Newsom on May 10 announced an unprecedented state surplus of \$75.7 billion and outlined the first elements of his “California Comeback Plan,” a **\$100 billion economy recovery package** that includes a proposal to give \$11.9 billion in direct stimulus payments to Californians in households earning up to \$75,000 per year in adjusted gross income.

The direct stimulus payments would expand to the middle class a previous program distributing \$600 checks to qualifying low-income residents. The Governor said that two-thirds of Californians would receive a check of at least \$600, and families with children and undocumented families would receive an additional \$500.

The California Comeback Plan would also include the largest statewide renter assistance program in the country, helping qualified low-income Californians pay back 100 percent of their back-rent and rent for several months into the future and giving billions to Californians to pay their overdue utility bills.

In a **Mother’s Day video** with First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom, the Governor indicated the package would also include increased spending for families and caretakers, including funding for 100,000 new state-subsidized child care slots and \$200 million to support career pathways for home health care workers.

While taking questions from reporters, Gov. Newsom addressed the future of distance learning in California. “June 30 at midnight, I anticipate that will lapse and everybody should be back in the fall,” he said. Given the current downward trend in the spread of COVID-19 in California and with more Californians being vaccinated, CSBA anticipates that schools will be open for full-time, in-person instruction in fall 2021. We also recognize, however, that some families and students may still feel uncomfortable returning to an in-person classroom setting or believe an online learning environment provides a better experience for their child’s particular learning needs. The virtual programs many local educational agencies are developing are not hybrid models but complete education programs, many with daily teacher interaction.

To best serve this group of families, CSBA maintains that existing statutes around independent study that allow for the development and operation of virtual academies should be preserved. LEAs have already or are in the process of establishing virtual learning academies and programs, utilizing independent study statutes as they exist in current law. Education Code 51865, which predated the pandemic, states that distance learning should be utilized by the state to achieve education goals that include equity in education, quality in education and diversity among educational institutions. Making changes to well-established law so close to the 2021–22 school year could be counterproductive and cause LEAs to have to return to the drawing board.

Our advocacy is not, as some have misconstrued, pushing for the extension of distance learning as contained in Senate Bill 98, Chapter 24 Statutes of 2000. Rather, we are merely asking that the Legislature does not infringe upon independent study laws that existed prior to the pandemic. These statutes already provide public schools the tools they need to serve students and families who are uncomfortable returning to in-classroom instruction in the fall, and to compete with charter schools offering virtual programs.

Gov. Newsom will reveal portions of the economic recovery plan each day this week, culminating with the May Budget Revision announcement on Friday, May 14. The Senate and Assembly will hold budget committee hearings throughout May and June, and the final budget must be passed by midnight on June 15.



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