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CALIFORNIA'S PATH THROUGH COVID-19 CRISIS DEPENDS ON MEETING NEEDS OF EVERY COMMUNITY

Across the state, every school and community are re-assessing how to survive in a time of global pandemic. To lift up our vision of a transformational, racially just education system built for us all, the California Partnership for the Future of Learning is officially launching today as a statewide alliance of community organizations and advocacy groups.]From March 16th through April 3rd , the Partnership interviewed more than 600 students and families, from 20 school districts across the state in an effort to identify the top needs for Californians of color. .

The challenges created by the Coronavirus crisis lay bare the painful realities that we have always known: working-class families and students of color have long been one small crisis or emergency away from a dire situation, while living and learning in communities with fewer resources and opportunities.

Through our Community Needs Assessment, 5 key focuses emerged:

- 1. Need For Mental Health Support, Sense of Belonging and Relationships**
 - a. Schools and districts must prioritize cultivating students' sense of belonging, relationships and connection in addition to academics. Students and parents report high levels of isolation, anxiety, depression and disengagement at this time.
- 2. Demand for Access to Equitable Learning Opportunities**
 - a. Students have unequal and limited access to quality home-based learning opportunities with responsive and supportive teaching that meet their educational needs.
- 3. Uncertainty for High School Seniors and Juniors**
 - a. High school seniors and juniors across the state are struggling with uncertainty and fears about not being able to graduate, impact on college applications, scholarships and financial aid, as well as the disruption of critical rites of passage.
- 4. Need to Engage Students and Families as Partners in Key Decisions Now and For the Future**
 - a. Shared decision making around funding and education decisions in partnership with students and families was already challenging before this crisis. But the pandemic deepens the need for communication and engagement as problems around sharing information, funding, resources and budget cuts deepen.
- 5. Prioritizing Intersectional Needs of Families and Students**

- a. Schools are more than just places of learning. With schools shut down, millions of families are cut off from their community and safety net. All families are struggling, but undocumented/mixed status households and low-income families in rural communities are experiencing unique hardships due to limitations created by their immigration status and/or geographic isolation.

“Rural communities are challenged to access technology -- both physical (computers) and connectivity (internet access). They have to figure out transportation to get services, even to access the meals that schools are providing. Community health clinics are the only option, which means sick family members might not get the care they need.” -- Maria Ortega, Lead Organizer with Californians for Justice in Fresno.

The challenges created by the Coronavirus crisis are hitting especially hard for our working-class families, students of color and other marginalized groups who have faced decades of historic inequities and neglect.

“As a next step, we invite legislators, electeds and leaders to hear directly from experienced organizers and advocates who work with those students, families, and communities most negatively impacted by the closing of schools and curtailing of life as we know it such as the hundreds of voices our grassroots groups have collected in a few short weeks.” -- Tere Onofre, Director of Organizing at SacACT, a member of California Partnership for the Future of Learning.

With limited resources even in the best of times, these families are often one small crisis or emergency away from a dire situation. As California moves forward in our path through the COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize the needs of our most marginalized residents and make sure that we create policies to support and empower every community. We have a chance right now to find real solutions to support residents during this pandemic and beyond.

More about the California Partnership for the Future of Learning:

The California Partnership for the Future of Learning is a statewide alliance of community organizing and advocacy groups advancing a shared vision of a transformational, racially just education system built for us all. It is led by [Advancement Project California](#), [Californians for Justice](#), [PICO California](#), and [Public Advocates](#), with the support of [Community Coalition](#), [InnerCity Struggle](#), and over a dozen grassroots, research and philanthropic partners dedicated to advancing racial and economic justice and building grassroots power.