Educators care deeply about the success of our students. That’s why the needs of our students always come first. For decades, we’ve seen generations of students make do with fewer and fewer resources.
But why, when they’re growing up in California, the world’s fifth largest economy? We don’t have to look too hard to see the dire state of school funding in California and why, year after year, the state budget fails to provide the adequate level of funding for education.

California voters will have a once in a lifetime opportunity to change this system in November — to reshape how our state distributes resources so that it reflects the values we all hold dear and to help deliver on the promise of a world-class education for our students.

As a kindergarten teacher and president of the California Teachers Association (CTA), I am proud to advocate for hundreds of thousands of educators, including teachers, counselors, school librarians, social workers, psychologists, nurses and classified personnel. We make up the backbone of our educational system and are some of the hardest working, most caring individuals you will ever meet. And yet, year after year, we are consistently asked to do more with less — and we do so because students are the center of everything we work for.

The governor just released his proposed budget and — while it makes some critical investments in particular areas of need, such as investing in teacher preparation and retention — it doesn’t do enough.

Year after year, California’s budget applies Band-Aid solutions to issues that require significantly more attention, such as reducing class sizes and making sure students throughout the state have access to nurses and counselors at their schools.

Today, we are at a crossroads. Our state’s educational system has been hamstrung for the past 40 years by financial policies that have rewarded large, old corporations with tax breaks while siphoning funding from schools to the tune of $12 billion every year.
This happens because corporations can take advantage of property tax loopholes to avoid being regularly reassessed at fair market rates, meaning their commercial and industrial properties are undervalued and thus they pay artificially low property taxes. When these corporations don't pay their fair share, schools don't get the resources they need to educate our students.

California voters have a once in a lifetime opportunity to change this system, to shape our state in a way that reflects our values and help deliver on the promise of a world-class education for our students.

The Schools & Communities First initiative is a ballot measure that, once qualified, will appear on the November 2020 state ballot. The initiative would reclaim $12 billion every year for schools and local communities by closing these corporate property tax loopholes and ensuring commercial and industrial properties are assessed at fair market value, while protecting residential property and small businesses from any changes.

This is a desperately needed reform of a flawed system that has benefited corporate profits over our schools and local communities.

Experts agree: Students need to be cared for both inside and outside of the classroom. You could have the most well-funded schools in the nation, but if students show up to class hungry or have to go home to unsafe neighborhoods, then they will always be held back academically by forces outside of their control.

The Schools & Communities First initiative takes a holistic approach to addressing inequities affecting our youth.

With more funding for local communities, students will have better opportunities to take advantage of parks and libraries and families can access critical programs such as affordable housing and public health services.

Responding to such needs shouldn't be controversial, but it's an unfortunate reality that there are those who will do whatever it takes to maintain the status quo — all in the name of corporate profits. We can't continue to let this system go on while our students are struggling.
Voters in California will have an important choice to make in November 2020: We can make the structural change necessary to ensure the long-term funding stream necessary for schools and local communities to thrive, or we can continue to let corporations avoid paying their fair share by exploiting property tax loopholes.

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Anyone who would use the head of CTA to make this voting decision is naive.

Good cheerleading from Mr. Boyd but I have a real hard time believing a $12 billion increase in funds for schools will enable a “structural change” in K-12 school education. Need way more than that to just keep teacher pensions viable! Meanwhile, what are the chances that corporations will just pull up stakes and move to Texas or Nevada and take families and good paying jobs with them? CA does need structural change but not this way.

This initiative will not generate $12 billion for schools. The LAO estimates only 40% will go to education, the rest to city and county government, special districts and successor redevelopment agencies.