



CITY OF PALM DESERT

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February 28, 2025

Senator Scott Wiener
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Protecting CSU Funding and Preserving Higher Education Access

Dear Senator Wiener and Assembly Member Gabriel:

As Mayor of Palm Desert and home to one of our region's key anchor institutions, the California State University, San Bernardino – Palm Desert Campus, I respectfully urge you to oppose the proposed \$375 million reduction in state funding for the California State University (CSU) system. Additionally, I request that the financial commitments outlined in the Multi-Year Compact be fully upheld for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

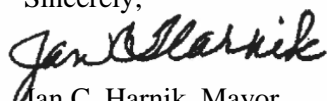
The CSU system and its universities are essential partners in driving economic growth across our region. Maintaining full funding for CSU will enable the system to continue increasing graduation rates, expanding access to higher education, and ensuring fair compensation for its employees—many of whom are residents of our cities. The CSU plays a vital role in fostering social mobility for thousands of California students and their families, graduating over 125,000 individuals each year. Beyond being educational institutions, CSU campuses serve as economic engines for their local communities and are key partners in strengthening our public sector workforce.

Twelve CSU universities, including San Bernardino, Fresno, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Northridge, Fullerton, Sacramento, and San Francisco, rank among the top 25 nationwide in the *Wall Street Journal's* 2025 Social Mobility Ranking. CSU institutions excel in providing affordable, high-quality education to economically disadvantaged students, equipping them with the skills and opportunities needed to graduate and secure well-paying jobs. We are excited about the CSU system's future, especially following its largest freshman class ever in 2024 and the launch of innovative academic initiatives, such as direct admission for high school graduates. To sustain the growth and prosperity of our cities and California's economy, it is essential that the CSU system receives the resources necessary to continue developing a highly skilled workforce.

The CSU system embodies the best of California's commitment to opportunity and social mobility. We are deeply concerned that the proposed \$375 million funding cut would cause significant and lasting harm, forcing campuses to reduce their budgets by up to \$30 million each. Such cuts would lead to job losses and diminished student access to higher education. Investing in the CSU should be a top priority in the 2025-26 state budget, and we strongly urge that this funding reduction be reconsidered as part of any budget agreement.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,


Jan C. Harnik, Mayor
City of Palm Desert