California State Senate Approves “At Promise” Adoption

On August 19, the California State Senate approved AB 413 which would replace the deficit term “at risk” in the Education and Penal Codes and adopt the affirmative term “at-promise.” Senator Steven Bradford, a co-author of the bill, presented AB 413 to his colleagues on the Senate Floor. “Perception matters and our youths are more than their situation. Let’s be intentional with our words and empower our students by using people-first language. AB 413 transitions California to the strength-based approach of at promise and recognizes the potential of every youth to succeed.”

The bill was approved by the State Senate on an overwhelming 34 to 2 vote. AB 413 was introduced by Assembly Member Reginald Jones-Sawyer to implement ACR 197 from last year, a resolution that he authored which was overwhelmingly approved in recognition of the importance of moving from deficit language to positive recognition of youth. ACR 197 recognized the importance of moving mindsets from the potential of youth who are predicted to fail, despite never being given a chance to prove otherwise, never being given the same access to resources and guidance as other young people, and never enjoying the privileges and opportunities afforded other young. Jones-Sawyer’s staff attended the 2017 RAPSA Policy Forum and shared the focus that attendees had on changing perspectives and opportunities for “at promise” students.

AB 413 has been approved at each stage of the legislative process and only needs to have its amendments approved by the house of origin before moving to Governor Newsom’s desk for signature. Since its introduction, AB 413 has added Assembly Members Santiago, Smith, Weber, and Kalra as co-authors along with Senator Bradford.

AB 413 was sponsored by SIATech and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). This year’s RAPSA Policy Forum [link] will feature California’s success with the bill and offer a session that describes how education leaders in other states can provide similar transformations in their statutes. The “Rising From At Risk to At Promise – Lessons From California’s Advocacy” session will be offered by RAPSA Executive Director Ernie Silva, JD; LACOE lobbyist Pam Gibbs, JD; and Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer’s Legislative Fellow Erika Ngo (invited).