California provided special education services to 774,665 students with disabilities (SWDs) in 2017/18.

The combination of flat or declining federal contributions and increasing special education costs has placed serious financial strain on state and local education agencies as they attempt to cover the gap created by Congress’ failure to meet their commitment of 40% funding.

Citation: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/sr/cefspeced.asp

State, Federal, and Local Contributions to Special Education Expenditures

Citation: Coalition for Adequate Funding for Special Education, “Percentage of Total Special Education Expenditures Supported by State, Federal, and Local Funds”, published 3/15/18
Participation in high-quality early intervention programs, like Head Start, reduces the likelihood of special education placement by 39%.

For every $100 a county spends per pupil on early intervention programs, special education placements drop by 1% to 3%, on average.

More time spent in a general education classroom is positively correlated with:
- fewer absences from school
- greater academic gains
- fewer referrals for disruptive behavior
- higher rates of employment and independent living after high school
- greater social competence and communication skills

Increase in the identification of severe disabilities, cost of living, and litigation expenses have led to rising per pupil special education costs.

Inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes increases program effectiveness.

While the prevalence of most disabilities has remained constant, the number of students diagnosed with autism and chronic health condition conditions have increased notably over the past decade.

Special education and early intervention are smart investments in California’s future.