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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair

2019 - 2020 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1578 **Hearing Date:** July 3, 2019  
**Author:** Luz Rivas  
**Version:** June 13, 2019  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Ian Johnson

**Subject:** School Pavement to Parks Grant Program.

### SUMMARY

This bill would establish the School Pavement to Parks Grant Program to assist schools located in disadvantaged communities to convert existing pavement to green space.

### BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the governing board of any school district to meet with appropriate local government recreation and park authorities to review all possible methods of coordinating planning, design, and construction of new school facilities and schoolsites or major additions to existing school facilities and recreation and park facilities in the community.
- 2) Finds and declares that school gardens provide an interactive, hands-on learning environment in which pupils learn composting and waste management techniques, fundamental concepts about nutrition and obesity prevention, and the cultural and historical aspects of our food supply. School gardens also foster a better understanding and appreciation of where food comes from, how food travels from the farm to the table, and the important role of agriculture in the state, national, and global economy.
- 3) Establishes the Instructional School Gardens Program, administered by the California Department Education (CDE) for the promotion, creation, and support of instructional school gardens through the allocation of grants, and through technical assistance provided, to school districts, charter schools, or county offices of education.
- 4) Prohibits a local governing board from setting a school located on land that was previously a hazardous waste disposal site, that contains pipelines that carry hazardous substances, or that is near an airport runway or freeway, other busy traffic corridors and railyards that have the potential to expose students and school staff to hazardous air emissions.
- 5) Requires the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to identify disadvantaged communities for investment opportunities. Requires these communities to be identified based on geographic, socioeconomic, public health,

and environmental hazard criteria, and may include, but are not limited to, either of the following:

- a) Areas disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative public health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.
- b) Areas with concentrations of people that are of low income, high unemployment, low levels of homeownership, high rent burden, sensitive populations, or low levels of educational attainment.

## **ANALYSIS**

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the School Pavement to Parks Grant Program with the purpose of enabling schools located in disadvantaged communities or low-income communities with no or minimal green space at schoolsites to convert existing pavement to green space.
- 2) Specifies that green space includes, but is not limited to, a garden used to implement a gardening education program that incorporates science, mathematics, and literacy for hands-on outdoor learning at schoolsites.
- 3) Requires applicants to provide a dollar-for-dollar local match for grant funding received under the program.
- 4) Requires the CDE to establish processes and procedures for the allocation of grants under the program, including at least all of the following:
  - a) The process and timeline for applying and awarding grants.
  - b) The maximum amount for each grant.
  - c) Eligible uses of grants.
  - d) Reporting requirements.
  - e) Verification that approval from the Division of State Architect (DSA) has been received, if necessary.
- 5) Specifies that priority for funding be based on the following:
  - a) Applicants with schools located in areas with the worst air quality.
  - b) The number of pupils who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at schools for which an applicant has applied for grants.
  - c) Applicants applying for a school where all, or a majority of, the playground at the schoolsite consists of pavement.

- 6) Requires applicants for schools with no or limited access to green space or poor air quality located in disadvantaged communities to receive priority for funding.
- 7) Requires each applicant to include the following information in its application:
  - a) The school or schools for which it is applying for grants.
  - b) The percentage of the school or schools' playground that consists of pavement.
  - c) The percentage of the school or schools' pupils who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
  - d) The amount of pavement the applicant seeks to convert to green space.
  - e) A description of how the grants will be used.
  - f) Demonstration of both of the following:
    - i) A commitment to maintaining the green space long term.
    - ii) That sufficient space remains for purposes of existing and future school activities on pavement.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** The author states that in Los Angeles, there are 1,629,450 low income individuals that are susceptible to health issues due to poor air quality. According to a recent study by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, African Americans and Latino minorities “bear a disproportionate burden from the air pollution caused mainly by non-Hispanic whites.” This recently published research “quantifies for the first time the racial gap between who causes air pollution – and who breathes it.” The data indicates that even though minorities are “contributing less to the overall issue of air pollution, they are affected by it more.”

The City Project recently completed a study which highlights that “children of color disproportionately live in communities of concentrated poverty without enough places to play in parks and schools, and without access to cars or an adequate transit system to reach parks and school fields in other neighborhoods.” On a nationwide basis, “48 percent of Latino children and 39 percent of African American children in urban areas were kept inside as much as possible because their neighborhoods were perceived as dangerous.”

Children are also more vulnerable to air pollution than adults. The health impacts associated with poor air include: reduced lung size and function, respiratory illnesses (such as asthma and bronchitis), emphysema, and even some types of cancer. Creating green space not only helps increase urban greening, it helps improve public health.”

- 2) ***Previous Instructional School Garden Program.*** AB 1535 (Núñez), Chapter 437, Statutes of 2006, provided \$15 million for grants to school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools for the development of instructional school gardens.
- 3) ***Fiscal impact.*** According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill would have the following fiscal impact:
- a) Unknown one-time Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressures to provide an appropriation for the grant program.
  - b) Unknown General Fund costs for the CDE to administer the program. Costs would depend on the size of the appropriation for the grants. CDE likely would need one or two employees to develop the grant, evaluate applications and award grants.
  - c) Minor costs to a school district that receives a request from a school in its district to participate in the grant program to inform the school that it has received the request. If the Commission on State Mandates determines the bill's requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would need to reimburse these costs to school districts or provide funding through the K-12 Mandate Block Grant.
- 4) ***Arguments in support.*** A number of organizations writing in support of the bill state, "Green schoolyards provide students a safe place to improve their physical and social-emotional health. Recent research indicates that students move more after campus greening, providing an important co-benefit of schoolyard renovations. Furthermore, green schoolyards have been shown to foster creativity and reduce stress and incidences of aggression. Again, in many disadvantaged communities, public schools not only serve the public, but also are the only place that children play."

## SUPPORT

Audubon California  
 California Association of Black School Educators  
 California Council of Land Trusts  
 California Environmental Justice Alliance  
 California League of Conservation Voters  
 California ReLeaf  
 California State Parks Foundation  
 Center for Climate Change & Health  
 Children & Nature Network  
 Community Nature Connection  
 Compton Unified School District  
 Courage Campaign  
 Eric Garcetti, Mayor Of Los Angeles  
 Friends of the Los Angeles River  
 From Lot to Spot

Long Beach Gray Panthers  
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust  
Oakland Unified School District  
Pacoima Beautiful  
Political Solutions  
Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment  
Safe Routes to School  
San Francisco Unified School District  
Sierra Club California  
The Hellman Foundation  
Trust for Public Land  
The Watershed Project  
The Trust for Public Land  
Union of Concerned Scientists

**OPPOSITION**

None received

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