



March 16, 2023

VIA Online Portal to Author, Senate Committee on Education, and Senate Committee on Government & Finance

The Honorable Steven Glazer
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 7520
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 28 (Glazer) – Education finance: school facilities: Public Preschool, K–12, and College Health and Safety Bond Act of 2024 – SUPPORT IF AMENDED

Dear Senator Glazer:

The League of Women Voters of California writes to **support SB 28, but only if amended to ensure a significantly more equitable system of funding K-12 facilities**. The current system of local match is regressive because it demands the same percentage match from property poor-districts as property- rich ones. While SB 28's new point system is a step in the right direction, it does not go far enough. A much more significant step would be to make the local match percentage directly proportional to the district's assessed value per pupil.

The League of Women Voters of California has consistently advocated for adequate and equitable funding of K-12 Education in California. In fact, we have supported every K-14 state facilities bond measure that has been put before the voters in the last 30 years, believing that a good physical environment is crucial to learning. SB 28 contains laudable elements like a new requirement that districts receiving state funding create five-year facilities plans and set aside a percentage of their budget for ongoing maintenance. We support these provisions.

The pandemic has punctuated the already existing inequities that exist for students in California and across the country. We continue to see disparities in school districts, where the quality of facilities depends largely on the zip code of the school site. Our students have dealt with inequities during distance learning, from lack of internet access to school districts being unable to return for in-person learning due to higher COVID cases by zip code. Previous bond measures have failed to address these inequities; in fact, they have exacerbated the already inequitable outcomes that our students face from racism, socioeconomics, and other systemic barriers to opportunity.

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It is long past time to adopt and implement the principle that students' physical learning environments should not depend on the wealth of the district in which they live.

Unfortunately, the current allocation system for the School Facilities Program (SFP) does not sufficiently account for differences in property wealth between districts. Wealthier districts find it easier to raise bond money, which then gives them access to money from the SFP. A recent study¹ documents that over a ten-year period the most property-rich districts in the state not only spent the most money per pupil on facilities, but also received the largest amount of money per pupil from the SFP. The point system in SB 28 that determines a district's required match offers minor relief to property-poor districts. It will still be true that the wealthier a district, the less effort taxpayers of that district will have to make in the form of property tax increases to obtain the same amount of state bond funds.

One incremental step to improve equity would be to expand access to state funding for the least property-rich districts in the state by allowing lower wealth districts to take advantage of the financial hardship provisions already in the SFP. The ACLU CA Action and several other organizations have proposed such a change in [this letter](#) from last year on an identical measure; which would be a welcome stopgap measure to move California in the right direction. Our understanding is that they will submit a similar letter this year.

California is already operating under the principle that access to quality instruction should not depend on the wealth of the surrounding community. It should apply that same principle to school facilities. The League of Women Voters of California would support SB 28 wholeheartedly if it were amended to ensure that funding for school facilities is equitable. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Carol Moon Goldberg
President

¹ [Eric J. Brunner and Jeffrey Vincent, *Financing School Facilities in California: A 10-Year Perspective*, 2018](#), accessed at bit.ly/FinancingCASchoolFacilities