

Introduced by Senator LiuFebruary 26, 2015

An act to add Article 14 (commencing with Section 33480) to Chapter 3 of Part 20 of Division 2 of Title 2 of the Education Code, relating to education finance.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 527, as introduced, Liu. Education finance: Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund Grant Program.

Existing law, the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act, enacted by Proposition 47, as approved by the voters at the November 4, 2014, statewide general election, among other things, established the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund, a continuously appropriated fund, which is funded by savings that accrue to the state from the implementation of the act. The act provides that, among other purposes, 25% of the funds shall be disbursed to the State Department of Education to administer a grant program to public agencies aimed at improving outcomes for public school pupils by reducing truancy and supporting pupils who are at risk of dropping out of school or are victims of crime.

This bill would express findings and declarations of the Legislature with respect to the purposes of the act. The bill would specify the administrative duties and responsibilities of the State Department of Education with respect to the administration, commencing with the 2016–17 fiscal year, of a Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund Grant Program, pursuant to which the department would issue a request for proposal to school districts each fiscal year and would make grants to applicant school districts. The bill would set forth criteria to guide the department in awarding grants under the program.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund has been
4 established by Proposition 47, approved by the voters at the
5 November 4, 2014, statewide general election. The funds
6 transferred to the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund are to be
7 used exclusively for the purposes of the Safe Neighborhoods and
8 Schools Act.

9 (b) Twenty-five percent of the funds are disbursed to the State
10 Department of Education to administer a grant program to public
11 agencies aimed at improving outcomes for public school pupils in
12 kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, by reducing truancy
13 and supporting pupils who are at risk of dropping out of school or
14 are victims of crime.

15 (c) Studies estimate that between 3.3 million and 10 million
16 children in the United States witness violence in their own homes
17 each year.

18 (d) Children who have experienced early, chronic trauma, such
19 as family or community violence, can develop emotional,
20 behavioral, cognitive, and relationship difficulties that can
21 adversely affect their ability to learn and function well in school.

22 (e) Exposure to trauma is associated with a higher risk for
23 dropping out of school, and in turn, dropping out of school
24 increases the risk of being imprisoned.

25 (f) Behavioral problems among schoolage youth are associated
26 with high rates of depression, experiencing a traumatic or violent
27 event, and other significant home-life stresses.

28 (g) Sixty-five percent of pupils with an emotional disturbance
29 drop out of school. This dropout rate is higher than all other
30 disability categories.

31 (h) For pupils with these mental health concerns, the American
32 Academy of Pediatrics has found that suspension can increase
33 stress and may predispose them to antisocial behavior and even
34 suicidal ideation. Psychologists have similarly found that
35 disciplinary exclusion policies can increase pupil shame, alienation,

1 rejection, and breaking of healthy adult bonds, thereby exacerbating
2 negative mental health outcomes for young people.

3 (i) Studies have shown that one suspension greatly increases
4 the likelihood that a pupil will drop out and become involved in
5 the juvenile justice system.

6 (j) Removing pupils from school through disciplinary exclusion
7 also increases the risk that they will become victims of violent
8 crime.

9 (k) Research has shown that coordinated alignment of integrated
10 pupil supports is an approach, well-grounded in theory, research,
11 and community experience that has been shown to reduce truancy
12 and chronic absence, and to improve academic outcomes, school
13 climate, and a pupil’s physical and mental health.

14 (l) Schools that address the “whole child” embrace youth
15 development principles and ensure the social-emotional health of
16 pupils, and create integrated and trauma-informed support systems
17 that have a stronger positive school culture, higher attendance,
18 higher graduation and achievement rates, and lower truancy rates.

19 (m) Pupils who attend schools where support systems are not
20 easily accessible by pupils and their families and where alignment
21 of support systems within the school and with community partners
22 is lacking are less likely to have access to programs that can address
23 the needs of vulnerable populations, thus exacerbating education
24 and health inequities.

25 (n) Schools that implement research-based, schoolwide
26 approaches to addressing social, emotional, and behavioral issues,
27 such as School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports,
28 restorative justice, community schools strategies, and school-based
29 mental health and trauma-informed practices demonstrate strong
30 educational outcomes, including increases in attendance and
31 achievement, particularly for pupils of color and other at-risk
32 populations.

33 SEC. 2. Article 14 (commencing with Section 33480) is added
34 to Chapter 3 of Part 20 of Division 2 of Title 2 of the Education
35 Code, to read:

1 Article 14. Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund Grant
2 Program

3
4 33480. (a) The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund Grant
5 Program is hereby established under the administration of the
6 department. Grants shall be issued under this program commencing
7 with the 2016–17 fiscal year. Pursuant to the Safe Neighborhoods
8 and Schools Act, approved as Proposition 47 by the voters on
9 November 4, 2014, the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund has
10 been established under Section 7599 of the Government Code, and
11 funds are allocated to the department from that fund under Section
12 7599.2 of the Government Code. In administering the grant
13 program, the department shall comply with all of the following
14 requirements in order to improve outcomes for public school pupils
15 by reducing truancy and supporting pupils who are at risk of
16 dropping out of school or are victims of crime:

17 (1) All school districts in the state shall be eligible to apply for
18 the grant program.

19 (2) The grant program shall reward school districts that have
20 demonstrated a commitment to, and developed a comprehensive
21 plan for, utilizing research-based strategies to increase attendance
22 rates, to reduce school removals of all types and referrals to police,
23 to address trauma, mental health needs and other social and
24 emotional factors that impact pupil outcomes, to address and to
25 remedy school pushout and dropout rates, coordinate pupil support
26 programs with community and other public agencies at schoolsites
27 and across the school district, and create a strong and supportive
28 school culture that identifies and addresses the needs of pupils,
29 including victims of crime, abuse, and neglect.

30 (3) A school district receiving a grant under this article shall
31 show at a minimum that it has designed, and is committed to
32 implementing, all of the following:

33 (A) A three-year plan, developed through its local control and
34 accountability plan or otherwise to accomplish all of the following:

35 (i) Significantly reduce class and school removals, absences,
36 violent incidents on campus, and referrals to police.

37 (ii) Implement research-based, whole school approaches,
38 including, but not necessarily limited to, schoolwide positive
39 behavior intervention and supports, restorative justice, community
40 schools strategies, trauma-informed practices, cultural competency,

1 social-emotional learning, and approaches to reengage pupils who
2 have been pushed out.

3 (iii) Identify and address disparities in any of the aforementioned
4 areas with respect to subgroups addressed by the local control
5 funding formula, including, but not necessarily limited to, English
6 learners, foster youth, low-income pupils, and pupils of color.

7 (B) A robust data system to collect and disaggregate data related
8 to the subject matter referenced in subparagraph (A).

9 (C) A system for sharing this data on the aggregate level with
10 the school community on a regular basis and engaging all key
11 stakeholders, including, but not necessarily limited to, parents,
12 teachers, pupils, school administrators, and classified staff in the
13 process of pupil and school improvement.

14 (D) A teacher, principal, superintendent, and school board
15 evaluation system to assess effectiveness related to addressing the
16 social, emotional, and behavioral needs of pupils and developing
17 strong, supportive, and positive school climates.

18 (b) The department shall issue a request for proposal to all
19 school districts in the state for each fiscal year that there are funds
20 available from the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund. The
21 request for proposal shall be issued no later than in August of each
22 fiscal year, or earlier if funds become available sooner.

23 (c) The funds granted to school districts under this article shall
24 be utilized to further implementation of the three-year plan and
25 the other minimum commitments specified in paragraph (3) of
26 subdivision (a). Grants shall be awarded under this article no later
27 than March 31 of each fiscal year.

28 (d) The department shall convene a stakeholder group, which
29 shall include at least one parent of a public school pupil and at
30 least one public school pupil, to assist in making determinations
31 regarding the awarding of grants and in assessing whether grant
32 recipients are meeting the minimum requirements set forth in
33 paragraph (3) of subdivision (a).