

September 22, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Delivered via email to: Leg.Unit@gov.ca.gov*

## **Central Valley Leaders Urge Governor to Sign AB 841 (Ting) Healthy, Efficient Schools and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure**

Dear Governor Newsom:

We are writing to urgently request your signature on AB 841 by Assembly Member Ting. This bill creates a program to make the air safer to breathe in public schools, while reducing energy bills to save schools money on operating costs.

The Central Valley suffers from some of the worst air quality in California (and the nation) and the recent wildfires have only exacerbated those conditions as we continue to fight the Covid-19 epidemic. We have already identified a number of critical school investments through the AB 617 communities, and while there is some existing 617 funding, it's far from adequate to make these schools safer for the hundreds of thousands of children and teachers in our communities.

There isn't a better time to invest funding into disadvantaged schools that desperately need to make HVAC system improvements to improve the indoor air quality of classrooms when our state is fighting a health crisis, and wildfires are blackening our skies with dangerous smoke.

Sadly too many California children - who are especially at risk from bad air - spend a large portion of their day indoors at schools that are poorly ventilated in classrooms that can be even more dangerous for breathing than the often smoggy air outside. In a recent 2019 study, researchers found that about **85% of recently installed HVAC systems in California K-12 classrooms did not provide adequate ventilation**. Ensuring that schools are ventilated and have good indoor air quality is critical to protecting and supporting the health and well-being of students and their teachers.

A recent white paper by the UC Davis Energy and Efficiency Institute and the National Energy Management Institute, points to several studies on poor ventilation in California's public schools and the need to improve heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Under the bill, the HVAC upgrades must be done by trained professionals in order to save energy and ensure a healthier building environment.

AB 841 does not use any money from the general fund; instead it uses only money already authorized by the CPUC that has not yet been allocated to programs, for a period of just 3 years. AB 841 directs these funds to a program administered by the California Energy Commission (CEC) to upgrade heating, cooling, and ventilation systems in public schools, prioritizing schools in underserved communities and those near freeways or industrial pollution. It also provides funds to replace aging and inefficient water fixtures and appliances in schools, saving water and energy while reducing exposure to lead. Allocating energy efficiency funds for a period of three years to employ workers to make schools safer and more energy efficient is a timely and important investment. Safe schools with manageable energy bills benefit **all** Californians including parents that need to work and businesses that need employees on the job.

AB 841 would help improve the health, safety and efficiency of school buildings, increase employment, and reduce deadly air pollution, all without exacerbating California's budgetary challenges. We request your immediate signature on AB 841.

Sincerely,

Felipe Perez  
City Councilmember  
Firebaugh City

Miguel Arias  
City Councilmember  
Fresno

Esmeralda Soria  
City Councilmember  
Fresno

Rey Leon  
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