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Comment Received From: Alisa MacAvoy, Board President, Redwood City School District

Submitted On: 4/12/2021

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Briefly Delay Program & Allocate Equitable Funding to All Under-Resourced Schools

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

Alisa MacAvoy
Board President
Redwood City School District
750 Bradford Street
Redwood City CA 94063

Sent via email - April 9, 2021

Commissioner Karen Douglas
California Energy Commission
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Program Guidelines
School Energy Efficiency Stimulus (SEES) Program – Assembly Bill 841

Dear Commissioner Douglas,

I know the California School Boards Association has also sent you comments on the SEES Program, but I wanted to send along comments in my role as School Board President for the Redwood City School District. We are a smaller/medium size school district serving about 8600 students with 12 district led schools, preschools and 3 charter schools. We serve high numbers of disadvantaged students.

We appreciate all of the efforts of the California Energy Commission (CEC) to advance clean energy in our communities and public schools. The SEES Program being administered by the CEC on behalf of California's local educational agencies (LEAs) provides a needed and critical resource to improve indoor air quality in California public schools. This is especially valuable for the public health of students in schools exposed to high levels of air pollution and to avoid transmission of COVID-19. It also a great opportunity to reduce energy waste, increase efficiency and develop pollution-free school buildings.

While the SEES Program will provide critical support for our schools, the Program Guidelines are being developed at a time when the leadership and staff of school districts in California are very much focused on getting students back to in person learning while still providing on-line learning to those students not choosing to come back this school year. School Districts like mine have been overwhelmed with all the extra tasks to keep staff and students safe this past year. As a result, I believe you have gotten limited input from school districts on your Program Guidelines. When I asked our Superintendent and Facilities Director recently about AB841 and SES, it was not on their radar screen given all our other competing priorities right now. We will not be ready to submit an application this month and I expect most other school districts will not be ready either. And, yet, we have A LOT of need for monitoring indoor air quality, improving indoor air quality and reducing energy use.

I'm concerned about smaller and middle size school districts and under-resourced LEAs who really need the SES funding. If the CEC goes ahead with funding on a first come first serve

basis, I believe that only well resourced, most likely larger school districts will apply for funds before others have a chance.

I request the CEC Commissioners consider a brief delay (2 to 4 weeks) in approving the Program Guidelines if that is needed to make a much-needed changes to the Guidelines or if possible make the change at your upcoming Commission meeting. Bottom-line: I would like to see a more equitable allocation method for distribution of the funds.

Please DO NOT require LEAs to prepare a grant application for a potential grant award through a competitive process; **DO** award AB841 initial phase grants to ALL LEAs with schools in underserved communities.

The issues with those guidelines: The CEC is creating a competitive process for initial phase grants, with those LEAs best prepared and resourced in preparing their program strategy, and a compliant grant. This results in two major problems:

1. **EQUITY.** The under-resourced LEAs are often the least resourced to develop such grant applications. This is especially true given the timeline, which is intersecting with LEAs efforts to re-open through the pandemic.
2. **COSTLY.** Most LEAs, likely without staff to author the grant application, will need to hire consultants to assemble their application. This creates an unnecessary financial burden on under-resourced LEAs.

Allocate equitable funding to all under-resourced schools. As such, all LEAs with schools that meet one of the “underserved community” criteria should receive a set-aside grant allocation based on the enrollment in that LEA’s eligible schools. The estimated allocation should be enough to fund the initial phase of the SEES program (e.g. HVAC assessments, general HVAC maintenance, adjustment of ventilation rates, indoor air sensors) to all under-resourced LEAs in California.

There could be a system if a school district chooses not to use their allocation that with a reasonable time, the money could be given to other school districts who have stated they need more.

Thank you for your consideration.

All my best,

Alisa MacAvoy
Redwood City School District Board President

Cc: CEC Chair, David Hochschild
CEC Commissioner, Siva Gunda
CEC Commissioner, J. Andrew McAllister
CEC Commissioner, Patty Monahan