

DOCKETED

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CaISHAPE Program Support From Ceres Unified School District

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

Ceres Unified School District

ADMINISTRATION
AMY PETERMAN, Ed.D.
Superintendent

BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION
KRISTI BRITTON, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent

July 19, 2024

California Energy Commission 1516 Ninth Street Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Urgent Appeal for Continuation of the California Schools Healthy Air, Plumbing, and Efficiency (CalSHAPE) Program

Dear Commissioners and Staff,

On behalf of Ceres Unified School District, I am writing to express our grave concern regarding the potential sunset of the California Schools Healthy Air, Plumbing, and Efficiency (CalSHAPE) Program and to urgently appeal for its continuation. We understand that the application deadline has been moved from July 31 to July 1, and there are discussions about permanently ending the program. We strongly urge the California Energy Commission (CEC) to reconsider this decision and to continue this crucial initiative.

The CalSHAPE Program has been a lifeline for school districts across California, offering substantial benefits that extend far beyond mere facility improvements. The program's potential termination poses significant risks to our students, schools, and communities:

1. **Student Health and Academic Performance:** Improved indoor air quality leads to better cognitive function, increased attendance, and enhanced academic performance. Studies have shown that CalSHAPE improvements have contributed to higher test scores and reduced absenteeism. Terminating the program could lead to deteriorating air quality in schools, potentially reversing these gains and negatively impacting student health and learning outcomes.
2. **Teacher Health and Retention:** The program has significantly improved working conditions for educators, leading to better health outcomes and increased job satisfaction. This has directly contributed to higher teacher retention rates, ensuring continuity and quality in education. Losing these benefits could lead to increased teacher turnover and reduced educational quality.
3. **Workforce Development:** CalSHAPE has created numerous jobs in energy efficiency, construction, and related fields. It has provided valuable training and experience for workers in the green energy sector, contributing to California's clean energy workforce development. Ending the program would result in job losses and hinder the growth of this crucial sector.
4. **Critical Infrastructure Needs:** Many school buildings are aging and in dire need of upgrades. CalSHAPE has been instrumental in updating critical infrastructure, including HVAC systems, plumbing, and lighting. Without CalSHAPE, districts will be forced to defer these vital improvements, leading to more costly repairs in the future and potentially unsafe learning environments.
5. **Environmental Sustainability:** The program has significantly reduced natural gas emissions and lowered the carbon footprint of schools across the state. By promoting energy-efficient upgrades, CalSHAPE has drastically reduced energy consumption in participating schools. Ending CalSHAPE would be a major setback to California's climate goals and sustainability efforts in the education sector.
6. **Financial Impact:** While ending the program might offer immediate budget relief, the long-term costs to our schools far outweigh any short-term savings. Energy-efficient upgrades result in substantial long-term savings on utility bills, which will be lost if the program ends. These savings allow districts to allocate more resources to educational programs, directly benefiting students.
7. **Equity and Social Justice:** The program has been particularly crucial for underserved communities, helping to bridge the gap in facilities quality across diverse socioeconomic areas. Terminating CalSHAPE could

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exacerbate existing inequalities in school infrastructure and educational outcomes, disproportionately affecting students in low-income areas.

8. **Pandemic Preparedness:** In light of recent global health challenges, maintaining and improving air quality in schools is more critical than ever for ensuring safe learning environments. CalSHAPE has been vital in upgrading ventilation systems to meet new health standards, supporting safe, in-person learning environments.
9. **Economic Stimulus:** CalSHAPE projects provide jobs and stimulate local economies. The program supports various industries, from construction to energy efficiency technologies. Ending the program could have negative economic ripple effects in communities across California.
10. **Return on Investment:** Studies have shown that every dollar invested in school infrastructure can generate \$2-\$4 in economic benefits. CalSHAPE represents a smart, forward-thinking investment in California's future, with benefits extending far beyond immediate facility improvements.

Ceres Unified School District would like to share with you the numerous benefits that come from participating in the California Schools Healthy Air, Plumbing, and Efficiency (CalSHAPE) Program:

Improved Air Quality- Upgrading our HVAC systems through CalSHAPE will enhance ventilation and filtration across our campuses, significantly improving indoor air quality. This improvement will reduce the presence of pollutants and allergens, creating a healthier learning environment and contributing to reduced absenteeism due to respiratory and other health issues.

Energy Efficiency- The implementation of energy-efficient technologies will lead to substantial cost savings on our utility bills. By adopting sustainable energy practices, we not only support environmental goals but also align with state and federal energy policies. These savings can be redirected to further educational enhancements within our district.

Updated Plumbing Infrastructure- Upgrading our plumbing systems will lead to better water conservation and lower utility costs. More importantly, it will ensure that all our students and staff have access to clean, safe drinking water by replacing outdated or lead-contaminated pipes and fixtures.

Educational Opportunities- Participating in the CalSHAPE program provides unique, hands-on learning opportunities for our students in STEM fields. By integrating green technologies and sustainable practices into our curriculum, we foster a culture of environmental awareness and responsibility among our students and staff.

Compliance and Funding- Engaging with the CalSHAPE program helps us meet critical state and federal regulations regarding air quality, energy efficiency, and water safety. Additionally, it provides access to essential grants and funding, which alleviates the financial burden of necessary infrastructure improvements.

Community Benefits- Our participation in CalSHAPE will enhance the image of Ceres Unified School District as a leader in sustainability and the well-being of our community. The long-term savings from these improvements will allow us to allocate resources to other pressing educational needs, ultimately benefiting our entire community.

We believe that the CalSHAPE program is an invaluable opportunity for Ceres Unified School District to implement these critical improvements to provide a safer, healthier, and more efficient learning environment for our students and staff.

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The risks and consequences of ending the CalSHAPE Program are severe and far-reaching. Districts will struggle to maintain healthy learning environments, students and teachers may face increased health risks and decreased performance, and California's progress towards its climate goals will be significantly hampered. Furthermore, the financial burden on already-strained district budgets will increase, potentially leading to cuts in other crucial areas of education.

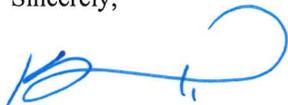
We strongly urge the CEC to:

1. Extend the current July 1 deadline to allow districts more time to prepare their applications.
2. Continue the CalSHAPE Program beyond this current phase, recognizing its vital role in maintaining and improving our educational infrastructure, supporting our workforce, and contributing to our state's environmental goals.
3. If budget constraints are a concern, consider scaling the program rather than eliminating it entirely.

Ceres Unified School District remains committed to providing the best possible learning and working environment for our students and staff, and the CalSHAPE Program is instrumental in achieving this goal. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this critical matter and stand ready to provide any additional information that may be helpful in your deliberations.

Thank you for your dedication to California's schools, students, and environmental future. We look forward to your positive response to continue this essential program.

Sincerely,



Kristi Britton, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent, Business Services

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