



AB 45 – School Employee Housing Assistance Program

IN BRIEF

AB 45 provides a tool to be used by school districts in order to increase recruitment and retention.

Specifically, the bill creates a \$100 million program which will provide financial assistance to school districts to help fund the predevelopment and development of housing for school employees, including teachers.

BACKGROUND

Districts throughout California still struggle recruiting and retaining teachers. In fact, non-retirement attrition accounts for two-thirds of teachers who leave. Further, increases in student enrollment have left many districts scrambling to find and retain qualified teachers.

Recruiting and retaining teachers affects the classroom as the turnover of teachers feeds into the increasing achievement gap. According to the Center for Education Policy Analysis at Stanford University, teacher turnover has a significant and negative impact on the achievement of students in schools with large populations of low-performing and minority students. These schools, like most schools in California, have seen a rise in the number of temporary permits, waivers, and intern credentials issued by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. This means that more students are being taught by individuals who have not completed, or in some instances begun, teacher credentialing.

This dynamic of teacher recruitment and retention has been exacerbated by many factors, including housing. Teachers and school employees, like other civil servants, are paid based on available state funding and not on market pressures. School teacher housing provides a creative tool that school districts can use in order to attract and retain new, qualified teachers.

In high housing cost areas, the issue of teacher retention rests largely on the insufficiency of salaries' capacity to cover housing costs. This year alone, the average rental price in Oakland has risen 13.7 percent to \$2,806 per month. In the City of Richmond, exit interviews have pointed to housing as the number one reason for teachers leaving their post.

For small school districts, especially those in rural areas, compensation tends to be low while housing is too expensive and in many instances unavailable. For other hard-to-staff rural school districts, recruiting teachers to live in remote districts has proved difficult. Teacher housing models have been used successfully in such rural school districts throughout the United States in order to recruit and retain new teachers, including North Carolina and West Virginia.

The long commute faced by such teachers and other classified employees in both high-cost areas is a detriment to children and their communities. When educators are forced to live outside of the community they serve, they are unable to truly become a member of that community. Research shows that teachers living in the communities where they work were more likely to develop the multicultural awareness and sensitivity that is presumably needed by teachers who commit to and continue teaching in the school. Without living in the community, they are unable to spend as much time before or after class with students nor can they provide the individualized teaching that is grounded in the culture of the community they serve. Ultimately, these school employees endure long commutes home and sometimes are forced to leave the profession entirely—leading to the very turnover that perpetuates the achievement gap.

In California, school districts have begun to increase teacher retention by providing housing to teachers. School districts in Los Angeles and Santa Clara, with San Francisco considering such a plan, have teachers in district-sponsored housing. However, for financially-strapped districts who cannot levy a bond to fund such a proven solution is not an option. For school districts in high-cost areas, current public housing subsidies is not a viable funding source due to the cap on income for qualified residents that are placed below the beginning wages for teachers.

SOLUTION

Provide financial assistance to school districts seeking to develop housing for school employees who (1) have land available for development (2) has a high percentage of teachers with intern credentials, permits, and waivers, as determined by the California Department of Education. School districts who have

60% of students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program are prioritized. Predevelopment assistance, excluding costs for land acquisition, are provided to developers who have partnered with qualified school districts. Development funds are provided to a developer partnered with a qualifying school district. Any development funded by this program must remain affordable for 55 years.

SUPPORT

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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