

Support an Equitable School Construction Bond

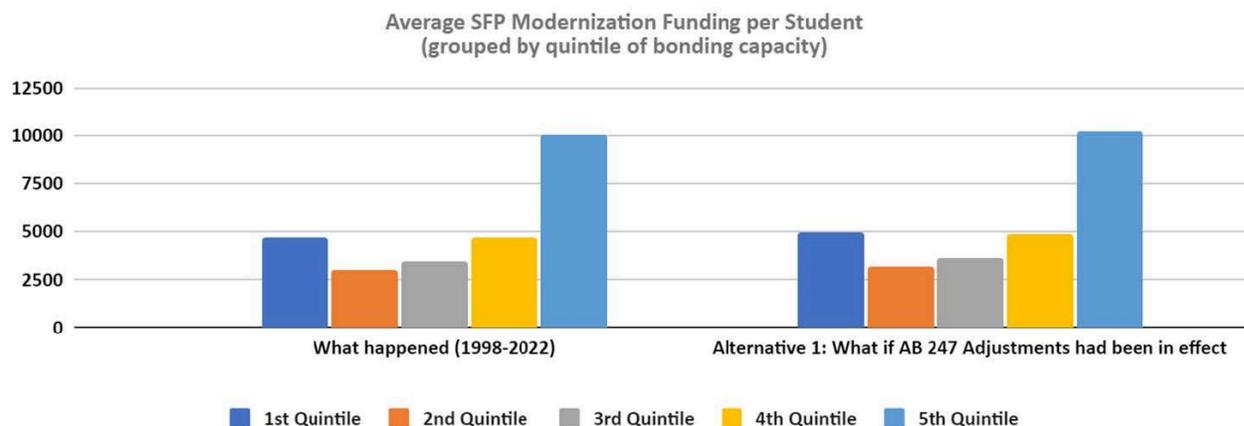
April 30, 2024

End California's Unconstitutional School Facility Funding System

The undersigned are gravely concerned about equitable access to state school facilities funding and believe that neither of the school facility bond bills currently in front of the legislature, adequately address the problem. [Public Advocates](#) and several community-based organizations across California are threatening to sue the state if the current School Facility Program is re-instituted as proposed via AB 247 or SB 28.¹ Since 1998, California has grossly disadvantaged low-wealth districts in allocating state modernization funding. This practice violates CA Supreme Court precedent, which prohibits the distribution of educational opportunities to districts differently based on disparities in local property wealth. *Rather than providing all districts a universal 60% state match, a fundamentally new sliding scale system is needed that allocates more modernization funding per pupil for lower-wealth communities.*

Students need equitable access to state school facilities funding for new construction and modernization. On average, the wealthiest 20% of districts have sixteen times more bonding capacity per pupil than the poorest 20%, sometimes as much as 25 times more. The existing system – a 60% state match to 40% local – advantages resource-rich districts that can more easily meet their match and more – constructing STEM labs and performing arts centers, while economically disadvantaged districts struggle to repair HVAC systems, repair leaky roofs, and remediate black mold.

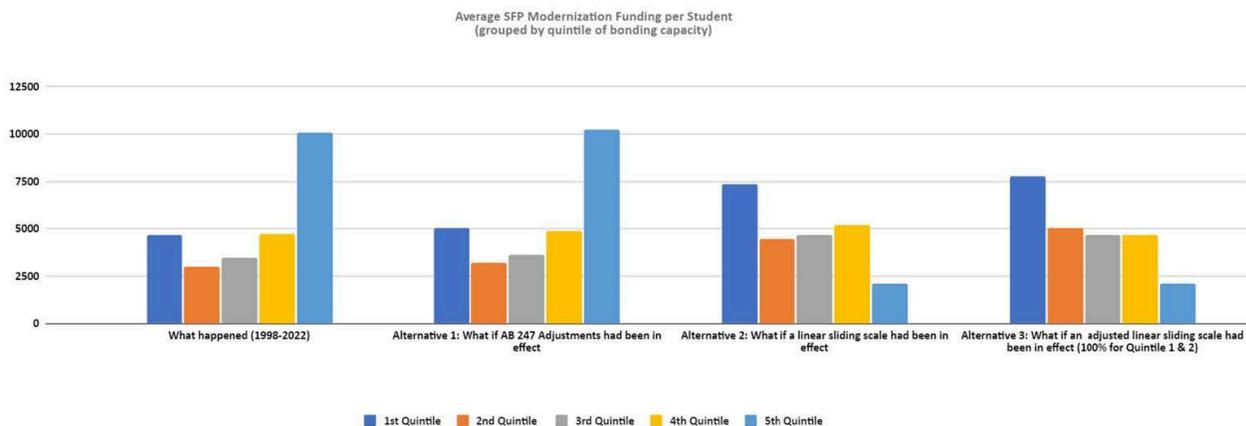
[AB 247](#) (Muratsuchi) and [SB 28](#) (Glazer) take steps toward equity. Yet, the data demonstrates that they will do almost nothing to change the systemic, inequitable deprivations visited upon low-wealth districts. More aggressive amendments are needed to avoid a lawsuit and address the long-standing disparity in access to state modernization funds.



¹ Impacted citizens and organizations, and their affected student and family constituents have brought forth their concerns. Complainants include 1) Building Healthy Communities - Monterey County ("BHC") 2) Inland Congregations United for Change ("ICUC"), 3) True North Organizing Network ("True North") and 4) Gary Hardie Jr.

Below, you will find principles and solutions for more equitable school modernization funding. We urge you to *support the equity amendments* to the pending legislation that will achieve the following:

1. **Sliding Scale Model:** *State bond modernization funds are allocated based on district wealth, providing higher matches for low-wealth districts.* We propose two potential models:
 - a. **Linear sliding scale (Kansas model):** This district with the lowest bonding capacity per student would receive a 100% match, with the second lowest receiving 99%. For every \$1,250 of increased bonding capacity, the state match would reduce by 1%. The poorest 60-65 districts would receive a 95% or greater match, while the richest 50-55 districts would receive no match.
 - b. **Sliding scale with equitable rebalancing:** Using the Kansas model based on bonding capacity per student, the lowest-wealth districts (quintiles 1 and 2) would receive full state funding, while the districts in quintiles 3, 4 and 5 would be on the linear sliding scale between 0% and a max of the current 60% state match.



This rebalancing acknowledges that California has grossly underfunded school facilities for low-income communities of color for generations despite their greater needs and reduced ability to raise local funds. *Favoring low-income districts creates a more equitable playing field.*

2. **Maintain & Expand Supplemental (Hardship) Program:** *Address additional unmet needs.*

This program is crucial for supporting districts whose demonstrated needs are not met by the main matching program.

3. **Priority System:** *Shift from a first-come, first-served model, which benefits wealthier districts, to prioritize the highest-need districts.*

This change will help ensure that the districts with the most pressing facility needs receive the support they require in a timely manner.

4. **Regular Monitoring:** *Ensure the School Facility Program (SFP) funding is disbursed equitably with the power to modify if necessary.*

Ongoing oversight is essential to maintain the program’s effectiveness and responsiveness to changing needs.

- 5. **Expanded Fund Use:** *Extend modernization funds beyond classrooms to spaces needed for integrated student supports, e.g., TK classrooms, community schools spaces.*

This expansion will help create more comprehensive learning environments that support the whole child.

- 6. **Facility Assessment System:** *Establish a system of assessing facility age and needs statewide on an ongoing basis.*

This data-driven approach will help inform future funding decisions and ensure that resources are directed where they are needed most.

- 7. **Technical Assistance:** *Support districts with low administrative capacity, including small districts.*

This support will help ensure that all districts, regardless of size or resources, can effectively navigate the funding process and secure the necessary resources for their students.

Your support is critical in ensuring fair and equitable access to quality school facilities statewide for all California students. We urge you to support equity amendments to AB 247 and SB 28 to implement solutions to solve the significant disparities in our facility finance program.

This request is supported by multiple organizations and school districts committed to advancing educational equity across California.





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