

Fixing California's Commercial Property Tax System Will Improve Public Health, Healthcare, & Social Services



The California Schools & Local Communities Funding Act would raise up to an estimated \$12 billion every year for local communities and schools by ending the unfair system that allows a fraction of the wealthiest commercial and industrial property owners to avoid paying their fair share in taxes.

California's current commercial and industrial property tax system has been starving local governments, cutting off positive investments in our communities, and stretching our safety net to the breaking point. Schools & Communities First would provide local governments across the state with an additional \$7 billion each year (60% of the total new revenue raised; the other 40% would go to school districts across the state). Local governments would be responsible for prioritizing how this funding is used through their annual budgeting processes.

While city governments in California often have responsibility for community planning, maintaining roads, policing, and some health-related services, county governments have primary responsibility for public health, mental health, social services, and health care services. Counties spend significant portions of their budget—typically between 25% and 50%—to mobilize resources and provide services to support the health of our children, families, and seniors—and the health of our entire community. While much of that is funded by state and federal programs, counties must depend on their own, locally-generated resources as well.

A significant part of the additional \$7 billion in funding could support expanding access to resources and opportunities that all people need to thrive and be healthy. In addition

to supporting action on community-level factors that impact health, including environmental, economic, and social conditions, counties could use these resources to improve access to health care, mental health, and social services.

Counties support health care for the general population, for uninsured patients, and for those who don't have the ability to pay, by funding:

- **County hospitals:** typically serving people with few resources
- **Community clinics:** often providing primary care services
- **Emergency Medical Services:** provided by medical professionals who respond to 911 calls and treat and transport people in crisis health situations

In counties across the state, including San Diego, Los Angeles, Riverside, Kern, Fresno, Merced, and Santa Clara, new funding would go directly to health care through special districts that are already in place. In other counties, the Board of Supervisors would need to allocate funding to health care.

Counties also support public health, which plays a vital role in keeping individuals, families, and communities healthy through a variety of programs that focus on "upstream" and preventative approaches, including:

- **Emergency preparedness**
- **Environmental health protection**
- **Chronic disease prevention**
- **Health promotion**
- **Injury prevention**
- **Epidemiological research to track and prevent communicable diseases**

County health departments work to advance health equity by getting at the root causes of poor physical, mental, and social health. They partner with the community and with other government agencies to ensure that where we live, work, learn, and play enable everyone to thrive.

THE CURRENT CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

has made it strikingly obvious that we need a stronger public health infrastructure. In recent years, funding to local and state public health agencies has been cut and we are now observing the effects of these cuts. Schools & Communities First would provide local governments in California funds they could invest in our public health system, so we are better prepared for future emergencies.

Schools & Communities First could fill critical gaps in county budgets or expand additional programs that support community health, including:

OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY

- **Communicable disease control and prevention**, including viral infections, tuberculosis, and STDs as well as immunization programs
- **Food safety programs**, including restaurant inspections
- **Controlling the spread of disease** through animals, insects, rodents, and other vectors
- **Drinking water safety**
- **Chronic disease prevention and control**, including professional development for medical providers in best practices to screen for and treat diabetes, obesity, and other chronic conditions
- **Reduction in exposure to air pollution and other toxic chemicals** from agricultural and oil production
- **Environmental/policy changes** to reduce injuries and fatalities from automobile collisions by designing safer streets

INFANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

- **Maternal and child health services** and programs, including:
 - **Home visiting services** for high risk pregnancies
 - **Early Care and Education** that increase access to quality child care and preschools for low-wage earners

CHILDREN & YOUTH

- **Immunization programs**
- **Childhood lead poisoning prevention**
- **Health inspections for schools**
- **Screening for developmental delays** and referral programs
- **Children and Family Services**, including early childhood programs and early childhood education and family support services through the Head Start & Early Head Start programs
- **Foster care**
- **Homeless programs** and services including through homeless shelters as well as transitional housing, shelter or interim housing, or rapid re-housing support
- **Programs to address food insecurity** for children and others
- **Support for special needs children** and their families

ELDERLY

- **Adult and Aging Services**, including paratransit, low cost meals for seniors, independent living support programs, and chronic disease management
- **In-home support services** for seniors and people with disabilities

PEOPLE FACING POVERTY, RACIAL, AND SOCIAL INEQUITIES

- **Substance use prevention and treatment**, including residential, non-residential, and diversion programs that place people in care rather than jail
- **Mental health services**, including psychiatric crisis and emergency treatment, inpatient care, outpatient/day treatment, and case management
- **HIV/AIDs and other sexually-transmitted disease prevention** and treatment

This overview of services demonstrates the breadth of ways local government supports our health and well-being. Schools & Communities First would allow our local government to deepen its investment in improving everyone’s health.

“The Covid-19 crisis clearly points out that our local public health infrastructure has been devastated by past funding cuts. County Health Departments are on the front lines of fighting the pandemic and desperately need the resources that Schools & Communities First would provide.”

LILI FARHANG
*Co-Director,
Human Impact Partners*

*“Schools & Communities First is an opportunity for local communities and counties to control their own destiny and **protect public health**, key health care services, and the safety net in their own area, especially as the state proposes tough cuts to programs that already did not have enough resources.”*

ANTHONY WRIGHT
*Executive Director,
Health Access California*

*“I think every Public Health department in California will see Schools & Communities First as a bright light in an otherwise very challenging budget outlook. We are grappling to expand our education, services and outreach to meet soaring human needs without the necessary funding—and to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected. This is also true for our direct health and mental health services. **Schools & Communities First will make a huge difference to our future.”***

KIMI WATKINS-TARTT
*Public Health Director,
Alameda County*



YES on 15—Schools & Communities First
has been endorsed by the following health organizations:



Learn more at: Yes15.org

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