



April 20, 2021

Mr. Matthew Rodriquez  
Acting Attorney General  
1300 I Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, California 95814

Attention: Ms. Anabel Renteria  
Initiative Coordinator

Dear Acting Attorney General Rodriquez:

Pursuant to Elections Code Section 9005, we have reviewed the proposed statutory initiative regarding environmental sustainability education in schools (A.G. File No. 21-0002, Amendment #1).

## Background

***State Has Adopted Science Standards.*** The state has adopted academic content standards that describe what students are expected to know by the end of each grade in each subject. The state adopted the current science standards in 2013. The standards cover a broad range of science concepts, including the use of natural resources, the impact of human activity on the environment, and global climate change.

***Teacher Professional Development Activities Are Locally Determined and Funded.*** Teachers negotiate with their school district—through the collective bargaining process—on the amount of required time dedicated to professional development each year. If teachers attend professional development during the school day, the district generally must pay the cost of hiring a substitute teacher. If these activities occur when school is not in session, the district typically compensates staff at a negotiated hourly or daily rate. The topics of the professional development also can be decided through collective bargaining.

***State Constitution Guarantees a Minimum Level of Funding for Schools.*** A constitutional amendment approved by the voters in 1988 (Proposition 98) established a minimum funding requirement for K-12 schools and community colleges. This minimum requirement grows over time based on increases in state revenues, the economy, and the number of students in the state. The state meets the minimum requirement by providing schools with funding from local property tax revenue and state tax revenue.

## Proposal

***Establishes Environmental Training Requirements for All Teachers and Students.*** This measure requires each teacher and student in a public school to receive 30 hours of education on environmental sustainability and sustainable best practices every two years. Topics may focus on

scientific or skills-based knowledge related to environmental sustainability practices. The training must expand on the level of knowledge students previously had and incorporate hands-on learning.

### **Fiscal Effects**

As we discuss below, this measure would result in various increased costs to schools that would likely be supported with state and local funds provided to schools under the existing minimum funding requirement for K-12 schools and community colleges. The magnitude of these costs would depend on various factors related to the implementation of the measure.

***Substitute Teacher Costs.*** This measure could result in higher costs for schools to hire substitute teachers to replace classroom teachers if the required teacher trainings are held during the school day. Although schools routinely hire substitute teachers, this measure requires each teacher to be out of the classroom for 30 hours every two years beyond typical teacher absences. As a result, a school would need to hire a substitute teacher to replace each teacher when they are receiving their required hours of training. We estimate that school spending on substitute teachers would increase by up to the low hundreds of millions of dollars statewide annually.

***Teacher Training Costs.*** This measure would also result in costs for schools to provide teachers the required training. Although training curriculum for teachers may already be available, schools would still need to select an individual to deliver the training to teachers. The trainer may be selected among other school staff or be hired from outside the school. We estimate that school spending on teacher training would increase by the low tens of millions of dollars statewide annually.

***No Change to School Funding Requirement.*** The measure makes no change to the minimum funding requirement for schools. As a result, schools likely would pay for the costs noted above with their existing funds. This means schools likely would need to spend less on other priorities. Though less likely, the state could decide to cover these higher costs by increasing funding for schools above the minimum requirement.

***Summary of Fiscal Effects.*** This measure would have the following major fiscal effect:

- Potential costs to schools up to the low hundreds of millions of dollars annually to hire substitute teachers while teachers receive training and provide trainers for teachers.

Sincerely,

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Gabriel Petek  
Legislative Analyst

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Keely Martin Bosler  
Director of Finance