



Senate California Legislature

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Senator, Sixth District

Chair
Health

Committees
Budget & Fiscal Review
Business, Professions & Economic
Development
Education
Human Services
Budget Subcommittee #3 on Health &
Human Services

SB 908: The California Student Representation Act

SUMMARY

California is home to nearly six million students and is only represented by one student board member at the California State Board of Education. SB 908 establishes a student advisory commission under the State Student Board Member on the California State Board of Education and details the duties, appointment process, and powers of the new commission. This bill will give students more opportunities to engage in decisions affecting their lives and futures.

BACKGROUND

Currently, California has one Student Board Member on the State Board of Education. This position was created to provide a youth perspective on education issues and to serve as a voting member. Several pieces of legislation have further increased access for student participation, including SB 532 (Leyva, 2015), which required the governing board of a school district to appoint a pupil member within 60 days of receiving a petition. In 2021, AB 824 (Bennet) authorized county boards of education to appoint a Student Board Member to the governing body via pupil petition. Additionally, AB 46 (L. Rivas, 2021) created a statewide youth commission, allowing youth to be heard in all important policy decisions.

PROBLEM

Although, much progress has been made to include student voices, there is still a lack of representation at the State-level to adequately elevate student voices on issues specific to education. The Student Board Member on the California Board of Education is tasked with representing all of the diverse and varying issues from students across the State.

Currently, there are over 269,000 students experiencing homelessness in California, with Latinx students making up 70% and Black students making up 9% of the California homeless student population despite being much lower in student population. In

2020, it was estimated that English language learners constitute 20% of total enrollment in our public schools. These are only a few examples of the issues facing our students. One Student Board Member serving a single-year term is not enough to adequately represent all the students and their unique needs.

SOLUTION

This bill establishes a 13-person youth advisory commission that will be led by the Student Board Member on the State Board of Education. Youth involvement in their local and county boards of education shall be taken into consideration when forming the commission. Every region of California must be represented, and commissioners should be appointed for their passion and experience, not grades. The commission aims to empower and provide meaningful opportunities for civic engagement to students of diverse backgrounds throughout California. Commissioners will have the opportunity to work with stakeholders, engage youth throughout the state, and assist with establishing student board member positions on local school boards. Commissioners will also be asked to articulate positions on youth-related education policy and make meaningful recommendations to the Student Board Member on the State Board of Education.

With diverse representation through the student advisory commission, the State Student Board Member can be better informed to make decisions representative of student experiences in education across the state.

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SUPPORT

California Association of Student Councils (Sponsor)