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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

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**Bill No:** SB 424 **Hearing Date:** April 19, 2017  
**Author:** Allen  
**Version:** February 15, 2017  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Lynn Lorber

**Subject:** The California Regional Environmental Education Community Network

### SUMMARY

This bill establishes the California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC) Network for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of high-quality environmental literacy in schools, and appropriates \$4.5 million for this purpose.

### BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Established the Office of Integrated Environmental Education within the California Integrated Waste Management Board, required the State Board of Education (SBE) and the State Department of Education to revise the framework in science, established a grant program, and appropriated \$1.5 million to promote environmental education and recycling in California schools. (Education Code § 33541, § 51226.4; and Public Resources Code § 42603, §42630)
- 2) Re-established the Office of Education on the Environment within the California Environmental Protection Agency and required it to develop environmental education principles and a model curriculum. (EC § 51226.4, and PRC § 71300)
- 3) Shifted decision making authority, regarding the incorporation of environmental principles into academic content standards and instructional materials, with the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the SBE. (PRC § 71302)

### ANALYSIS

This bill establishes the CREEC Network for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of high-quality environmental literacy in schools, and appropriates \$4.5 million for this purpose. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Establishes the CREEC Network for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of high-quality environmental literacy in California public schools that reflects science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and career technical education with a particular focus on the environmental literacy elements of the Next Generation Science Standards and framework, the California History-Social Science Standards and framework, and the Career Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards.

- 2) Requires the California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC) Network, as directed by the governing board, to accomplish the purposes of this bill by undertaking activities that include, but are not limited to, all of the following:
  - a) Convening and building partnerships among local educational agencies and between local educational agencies (LEAs) and community-based environmental education providers in all aspects of environmental literacy.
  - b) Providing professional development to educators in environmental literacy and the integration of environmental literacy content and principles with other state-adopted standards and curriculum frameworks.
  - c) Provide expertise and assistance to educators in the development and implementation of curriculum inside and outside of the classroom and activities that promote environmental literacy.
  - d) Assisting LEAs in embedding environmental literacy in local control and accountability plans.
  - e) Assisting educators in linking environmental literacy content and principles to career pathways and to career technical education curriculum and activities.
  - f) Assisting LEAs in assuring that environmental literacy curriculum and activities are made available on an equitable basis to all students and that the environmental literacy curriculum and activities reflect the linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of California.
  - g) Making grants to LEAs and to community-based environmental education providers to accomplish the purposes of this bill.
  
- 3) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction, with the approval of the CREEC governing board, to contract with a LEA, or consortium of LEAs, to serve as the fiscal agent for the CREEC. This bill requires the fiscal agent, at a minimum, to:
  - a) Establish the regional structure for the CREEC.
  - b) Retain a full-time director and at least 15 full-time regional coordinators.
  - c) Periodically convene the regional coordinators for training to assist LEAs and community-based environmental education providers in the alignment of both classroom and non-classroom environmental literacy instruction with appropriate state-adopted standards and curriculum frameworks.
  - d) Develop and maintain a resource directory and website to assist LEAs and community-based environmental education providers accomplish the purposes of this bill and that serves as a resource for environmental literacy issues for employers and other organizations involved in science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

- 4) Appropriates \$4.5 million (Proposition 98) to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) for allocation to the California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC), and requires the SPI to apportion funds appropriated for the CREEC to the fiscal agent.
- 5) Requires the CREEC to be under the direction and control of a five-member governing board, appointed as follows:
  - a) Two members appointed by the Governor.
  - b) One member appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.
  - c) One member appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.
  - d) One member appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "In 2015, California's State Superintendent of Education issued a report indicating that of 520 schools surveyed only 13% had successfully integrated environmental education into their curriculum. Research from a recent report by Inverness Associates entitled *Environmental Education and Sustainability in Public Schools* identifies practical barriers to the integration of environmental education. Teachers surveyed pointed to an overwhelming existing workload, a lack of funding and serious time constraints. Administrators and principals cite a lack of training and professional development opportunities. California invests millions of private and public dollars into a rich network of aquariums, science museums, state parks, and other wild and natural places. For instance, the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California, Berkeley serves millions of students annually. In Santa Monica, the Key to the Sea program provides professional development for teachers, standards-aligned curricula for classrooms and hands-on field trips for students. Nevertheless, reports and statistics indicate these resources and others like them are not being utilized by the vast majority of our state's students."
- 2) ***Environmental education.*** The California Department of Education formed the statewide CREEC Network in the late 1990s to increase resource sharing among education providers at the state, regional, county, and local levels. The Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI) was established in the early 2000s, which: (a) created the Office of Education and the Environment; (b) mandated the creation of California's Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&Cs) to complement existing standards; and (c) required the creation of an environment-based model curriculum driven by the state's science and history-social science standards. The EP&Cs are required to be included in textbook adoption criteria for science and history-social sciences, mathematics, and English language-arts. The State Board of Education unanimously approved the EEI curriculum in 2010, which included the EP&Cs. The Office of Education

and the Environment, in coordination with the California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC) Network, began working with K-12 educators to implement the curriculum on a voluntary basis. In 2011, the Schools of the Future Task Force, established by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, recommended the creation of an Environmental Literacy Plan to help organize and coordinate the state's environmental education efforts. Responding to this recommendation, the Environmental Literacy Task Force was convened in 2014 to develop a Blueprint for Environmental Literacy for the state.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/sc/oeintrod.asp>

- 3) **California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC).** The CREEC Network is a communication network supporting environmental literacy by providing teachers with access to high-quality environmental education resources. The CREEC Network is administered by the California Department of Education in partnership with the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education and the California Department of Water Resources. Along with statewide sponsors and partners, each CREEC region is supported by a regional coordinator who provides professional development and resources to educators as well as foster communication among schools and organizations interested in supporting environmental literacy of California's teachers and students.

This bill codifies the CREEC Network and appropriates \$4.5 million to establish a permanent funding source.

- 4) **Existing funding.** State-level funds for environmental education generally come from two sources, the Environmental License Plate Fund and the Office of Education and the Environment. Environment License Plate funds have traditionally been the California Department of Education's (CDE) primary source of funding for environmental education programs like the CREEC Network. The CDE receives about \$400,000 per year from the Environmental License Plate Fund. The Office of Education and the Environment provides \$2 million in annual funding for the Education and the Environment Initiative. The Environmental Education Grant Program, administered by the CDE, is a one-year grant that funds a part-time regional coordinator in each of the CREEC regions to foster collaboration around professional development and resources for educators.

- 5) **Author's amendments.** The author wishes to amend this bill as follows:
- a) Add the requirement that the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), by the end of the 2020-21 fiscal year, contract with an appropriate entity to conduct an evaluation of the CREEC Network, and requires the evaluation to do at least all of the following:
- i) Determine the degree to which the CREEC Network has accomplished the general purposes set forth by this bill.
  - ii) Determine the degree to which the CREEC Network has implemented the activities set forth by this bill and the degree to which each of these activities have contributed to accomplishing

the general purposes of this bill.

- iii) Make recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC) Network, including statutory changes to improve its effectiveness.
  - b) Modify the requirement that the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) contract with a local educational agency to serve as the fiscal agent, to instead require the SPI to provide a grant to a local educational agency to serve as the fiscal agent.
  - c) Clarify that the regional coordinators and community partners will take actions specified in #2 of the Analysis section, rather than the CREEC Network taking those actions.
  - d) Add “embedding environmental literacy elements in local priorities and goals” relative to providing assistance to local educational agencies in embedding environmental literacy in their local control and accountability plans.
  - e) Add legislative findings and declarations.
- 6) ***Fiscal impact.*** This bill appropriates \$4.5 million (Proposition 98) to the SPI for allocation to the CREEC, and requires the SPI to apportion funds appropriated for the CREEC to the fiscal agent.

## SUPPORT

Ten Strands (sponsor)  
 Alliance for Climate Education  
 AltaSea  
 ArtPlantae  
 Aspire Clean Tech Communications  
 Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations  
 Audubon California  
 Bioneers  
 Biomimicry Institute  
 Bowman Change, Inc.  
 California Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs  
 California Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education  
 California Black Health Network  
 California Institute for Biodiversity  
 California Interfaith Power & Light  
 California League of Conservation Voters  
 California Native Plant Society  
 California Outdoor Engagement Coalition, University of California, Berkeley, College of Natural Resources  
 California Pan-Ethnic Health Network  
 CALPIRG  
 Canopy

Center for Ecoliteracy  
ChangeScale  
ChicoBag Company  
Children & Nature Network  
Common Sense Kids Action  
Cool the Earth  
David Brower Center  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Earth Day Network  
EarthEcho International  
Earth Island Institute  
Education Outside  
Einstellung Labs  
Enphase Energy  
Environmental Charter Schools  
Environmental Working Group  
Exploratorium  
Friends of the Los Angeles River  
Golden Gate National Parks conservancy  
Greenbelt Alliance  
Green Ninja, Inc.  
Green Schoolyards America  
Heal the Bay  
InterpretPlants Studio  
LandPaths  
Latino Outdoors  
Living Classroom  
Marine Science Institute  
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
Monterey Bay Aquarium  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
NatureBridge  
Nature Conservancy  
North American Association for Environmental Education  
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center  
Outdoor Afro  
Outdoor Outreach  
Rainforest Action Network  
San Diego Natural History Museum  
San Francisco Parks Alliance  
San Jose Conservation Corps & Charter School  
San Mateo County Office of Education  
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority  
Seventh Generation Advisors  
Solar Entergy Industries Association  
Strategic Energy Innovations  
Surfrider Foundation  
The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education  
The Episcopal Diocese of California  
The Jane Goodall Institute

The Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley  
The Trust for Hidden Villa  
The Trust for Public Land  
The Wildlands Conservancy  
The Wildwoods Foundation  
TreePeople  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Urban Sprouts  
U.S. Green Building Council  
Vida Verde Nature Education  
Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation  
YMCA of the East Bay  
Individuals

**OPPOSITION**

None received

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