



# Senate Bill 1380 (Dodd) - Charter Schools

[Introduced: February 16, 2024](#)

## **Background**

- In 2019, Assembly Bill 1505 expanded the list of reasons for which districts may deny new and expanding charter petitions, including specified adverse fiscal impact on the district budget. Supporters of the measure insisted that AB 1505 was sufficiently comprehensive and was the final word on restricting charter growth.
- According to the author, [Senator Bill Dodd](#) (D - Napa), the bill is needed to protect fiscally distressed school districts from competition by charter schools, regardless of student outcomes. However, in 2022, nearly 18 years after their \$60 million bailout from the state, Vallejo City Unified successfully used their loan repayments as a legal rationale under AB 1505 to deny a petition from an existing, successful charter network seeking to expand to serve high school students.
- The implications of this bill are alarming. California's state budget relies heavily on volatile capital gains taxes, which can lead to large surpluses one year and big cuts the next. While the state has taken action to lessen the boom-and-bust budget cycle (like investing in rainy day fund for schools), SB 1380 adds numerous and vague financial criteria so that a school district taking action to balance their budget would trigger a presumptive legal denial of charter petitions for new or expanding schools for up to 5 years.
- School districts have all the tools they need to balance their budgets. This bill will make it easier for faltering district leaders to kick the can down the road by blaming charter schools and ignoring stakeholders. SB 1380 makes no mention of mitigating the impact of fiscally distressed districts on student academic achievement, family needs, or the impact a chronically failing school district can have on housing or quality of life.

## **Summary**

Senate Bill 1380 impacts both new and existing charter schools seeking material revisions by dramatically expanding the ability of school districts to deny charters and impose a

presumption of denial on most petitions for new charters and expansions of existing charter schools.

### ***1. Expanded, Vague Denial Criteria Based on Finances, Not Student Need***

SB 1380 adds numerous and vague financial criteria that would trigger a presumptive denial of charter petitions for school districts and counties that have:

- “Adopted recent budgetary solutions” to address fiscal solvency within the past 5 years, like the consolidation of school sites
- Outstanding emergency loans from the state
- Enrollment declines up to 5 years after repaying an emergency loan

### ***2. Eliminates County’s Authority to Respond to Stakeholders***

SB 1380 prohibits submitting similar charter school petitions to the county board of education if previously denied by the district board, with no time limits or definitions. Effectively, this bill limits the authority of counties to conduct a fair, independent review of charter school programs, in response to student needs, based on standards and criteria in current law.

### ***3. Creates Imbalanced and Arduous Hearing Procedures***

SB 1380 would grant local education agencies outside of the authorizer’s jurisdiction, and all contiguous counties, “equal time” to weigh-in during charter petition hearings, without guaranteeing charter school proponents equal time to respond to each of the outside entity’s assertions. Public participation is already prescribed and protected by the Ralph M. Brown Act open meeting law. This bill elevates bureaucratic interests over community voices by providing preferential treatment to local education agencies outside of the authorizer’s jurisdiction, raising concerns about fairness and resulting in longer, arduous hearings.

## **Impact on Students and Families**

SB 1380 threatens to limit access to high-quality charter schools and unfairly restrict options for parents and students, particularly in financially distressed districts. This bill will jeopardize access to public school choice at a time when families are facing unprecedented [mental health challenges](#) and learning loss. To address this problem, students and communities need more options — not fewer.

Your urgent action is needed to safeguard educational opportunities and ensure equitable access to quality education for all students.

***Contact your State Senator today and urge them to VOTE NO on SB 1380.***