

Assembly Bill 1021 (Wicks/Maratsuchi)

Improving Access to Educational Workforce Housing

Proposal

Assembly Bill 1021 would help address the staffing crisis in California's education workforce by making it easier for local educational agencies (LEAs) to facilitate housing for their workforce on LEA property.

Background

The lack of affordable housing has long been a challenge to the recruitment and retention of school district employees — including teachers and classified staff (i.e., administrative staff, technical and support staff, bus drivers and custodial staff). The cost of housing has skyrocketed since the Great Recession, fast outpacing the ability of teachers and classified staff to afford it. As a result, LEA employees are forced to move further away from the schools they serve, or are leaving the workforce altogether. This results in chronic staff shortages across the state, including in rural, suburban and urban districts.

In response, LEAs have begun to consider building workforce housing on land they own. Some (like Santa Clara Unified and Los Angeles Unified) have successfully built projects. Most LEAs interested in building workforce housing, however, still face numerous roadblocks that make this construction infeasible.

AB 2295 (Bloom, 2022) addresses one of the roadblocks by making housing an allowable use on land owned by LEAs that meet specified locational criteria. AB 2295 also required that any housing built on this land be offered first to local school district employees and second to the employees of adjacent districts. It also required nearly one-third of those units to be dedicated to lower income households, and that at least half be affordable to moderate-income households.

While AB 2295 represented an important step to improve and smooth the process for LEAs to develop educational workforce housing, further feedback from interested LEAs has identified key obstacles to the development of essential affordable housing for the state's educational workforce.

Request

Based on input from LEAs interested in building educational workforce housing, AB 1021 would make the following changes to state law:

- Expand the number of LEA-owned sites eligible for residential development;
- Establish an allowable density that is feasible for employee workforce housing;
- Add school district employee housing to an existing California Environmental Quality Act exemption for infill affordable housing projects; and
- Make clarifying changes to the government, educational and revenue and taxation codes to provide more certainty for LEAs and local governments.

Cumulatively, these changes would systematically address the remaining hurdles that interested LEAs face in building education workforce housing.

