

SECTION 1. Title

This measure shall be known as “The California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act of 2020.”

SEC. 2. Findings

- a) California is the fifth largest economy in the world, but if we don’t invest in our future, we’ll fall behind. To grow our economy and provide a better quality of life now, and for future generations of Californians, we need to do a better job of investing in our schools, community colleges, and local communities, and do more to encourage small businesses and start-ups.
- b) Our competitiveness begins with making children and their education a priority. Decades of cuts and underfunding have undermined California schools. A recent national study ranked the performance of California schools in the bottom half of all states. The top ranked states spend thousands of dollars more per student than California.
- c) California’s funding shortfall has direct consequences for our kids: we’re dead last in the nation in teacher to student ratios, last in guidance counselor to student ratios, and last in librarian to student ratios.
- d) The quality of life in our local communities is also critical to our economic future. It depends on streets that are safe and clean, emergency services we can count on, parks and recreation programs that keep our youth off the streets, and roads that are well maintained. Our cities, counties and local agencies are on the front line facing the consequences of the lack of affordable housing and increasing homelessness as well as worsening risks from wildfires and other disasters.
- e) Property taxes on commercial and industrial properties are a principal source of funding for our schools and local communities. While virtually every other state assesses commercial and industrial property based on its fair market value, California allows commercial and industrial property taxes to go many years, even decades, without reassessment. This unusual system is prone to abusive tax avoidance schemes, diverts funds away from schools and local communities, contributes to the shortage of affordable housing, distorts business competition, and disadvantages business start-ups.
- f) California’s under-assessment of commercial and industrial properties is a growing problem. Large investors and corporations – many of whom are from other states and countries are using a variety of schemes to get around the law and buy and sell properties without being reassessed, costing our schools and local communities billions of dollars.
- g) A recent study by the University of Southern California has found that under-assessed commercial and industrial property allows owners to avoid over \$11 billion in local property taxes each year that should be going to support our schools and local communities.

- h) California's unusual commercial and industrial property tax system contributes to California's affordable housing crisis. Studies by the Legislative Analyst Office and the University of California have demonstrated that California's property tax system incentivizes owners to hold vacant and under-utilized commercial and industrial property idle. A reformed system, that assesses all properties based on their fair market value, would create a powerful new incentive to build new housing.
- i) Every commercial and industrial property owner benefits from local schools and services like public safety and infrastructure. It is unfair and anti-competitive that the property tax system forces some businesses to pay higher property taxes to support our schools and local communities while their competitors pay much lower property taxes because their properties are assessed far below their fair market value.
- j) California's unusual property tax system not only distorts competition, it discourages business investments. Under the current system, businesses that invest in improving their properties trigger reassessment and higher property taxes. But businesses that don't invest in improving their properties continue to enjoy the low cost of under assessment.
- k) A study done at the University of California demonstrated that reassessing commercial property will have a net positive benefit on jobs and the California economy.
- l) If we reformed California's under-assessment problem on business properties, California would still rank among the lowest states for business property taxes in the nation because of the California Constitution's provisions related to the 1% limitation on property tax rates.
- m) Thriving small businesses and start-ups are essential to California's economy now and for our future. The property tax on equipment and fixtures discourages new start-ups, small businesses and larger businesses from making new productive investments. By requiring under-assessed large properties to be assessed at fair market value, small businesses can be fully exempted from the property tax on equipment and fixtures and the tax can be substantially reduced for other businesses, removing this disincentive without harm to funding for our schools and local communities.
- n) Reassessing under-assessed commercial and industrial property in California would primarily impact a small number of properties owned by the largest corporations and wealthiest investors. Almost 80% of the tax benefits of the under-assessment allowed by the current system go to just 8% of the properties.
- o) The benefits to our schools, local communities and economy resulting from ending the under-assessment of commercial and industrial property can be achieved while protecting small businesses through exemptions and deferrals of reassessment and at the same time encouraging small businesses by creating a more level playing field and by eliminating the property tax on business equipment and fixtures.

- p) Reforming commercial and industrial property assessments to fair market value will result in a fairer system for our schools, our local communities and our businesses. All businesses will compete on a level playing field, generating billions of dollars in additional support for our schools and local communities.

SEC. 3. Purpose and Intent.

It is the intent of the People of the State of California to do all of the following in this measure:

- (a) Preserve in every way Proposition 13's protections for homeowners and for residential rental properties. This measure only affects the assessment of taxable commercial and industrial property.
- (b) Provide for increased and stable revenues for schools, cities, counties and other local agencies by requiring under-assessed commercial and industrial properties to be assessed based on their full market value.
- (c) Distribute the new revenues resulting from this measure to schools and local communities, not to the State.
- (d) Ensure that the portion of any new revenues going to local schools and community colleges as a result of this measure is treated as new revenues that are in addition to all other funding for schools and community colleges, including Proposition 98.
- (e) Guarantee every school district and community college will receive additional funding from this measure and that funds going to schools and community colleges are allocated in a manner that is consistent with local control funding formulas intended to advance equity.
- (f) Ensure that any new revenues going to cities, counties and special districts as a result of this measure will be allocated in the same manner as other property tax revenues, consistent with prior ballot measures approved by voters, to improve the quality of life in local communities in all parts of California.
- (g) Make certain there is complete public transparency by requiring schools, community colleges, cities, counties and special districts to publicly disclose the new revenues they receive and how those revenues are spent in a manner that is widely available and easily understood.
- (h) Be very clear that this measure only applies to taxable commercial and industrial real property by including provisions stating that:
 - a. All residential property is exempt so homeowners and renters will not be affected in any way by this measure.
 - b. This measure makes no change to existing laws affecting the taxation or preservation of agricultural land.

- (i) Make no change to Proposition 13's constitutional provisions relating to the 1% limitation on property tax rates for all taxable real property so local property taxes on commercial and industrial property will continue to be among the lowest in the country after this measure is approved by voters.
- (j) Ensure stability for owners of small business properties by providing an exemption for small commercial and industrial real property owners. The intent of this provision is to provide an exemption that applies only to the true owners of small businesses and that large property owners shall be prevented from using the exemption for their own benefit.
- (k) Defer reassessments for properties in which small businesses account for 50% or more of the occupied space until the 2025-2026 lien date to provide those small business tenants additional time to choose the leasing option that works for them, recognizing that the impact of this measure will be different for each property, depending on how close the current assessment is to fair market value and whether or not it qualifies for the small property exemption for properties with a fair market value of \$3 million or less.
- (l) Encourage new and existing businesses to make new investments by eliminating the business tangible personal property tax on equipment and fixtures for small businesses and providing a \$500,000 per year exemption for all other businesses. The Legislature may not reduce these exemptions, but it may increase them.
- (m) Provide greater equity in the taxation of commercial and industrial properties by assessing all of them based on their actual fair market value just like start-ups and new commercial and industrial properties that already are being assessed based on their actual fair market value. The intent is for all businesses to compete on a more level playing field and make sure all businesses are paying their share to support the schools and local communities from which they benefit.
- (n) Require the Legislature, after conferring with county assessors, to provide by statute for the phase-in of re-assessments of under-assessed commercial and industrial real properties so that county assessors may effectively implement the new law. Such phase-in will begin with the lien date for the 2022-23 fiscal year and occur over several years. Affected owners shall only be obligated to pay the taxes based on the new assessed value beginning with the lien date for the fiscal year when the assessor has completed the reassessment.
- (o) Require the Legislature to ensure that the phase-in provisions provide affected owners of under-assessed commercial and industrial real properties reasonable time to pay any increase in their tax obligations resulting from this measure.
- (p) Provide for the recovery of actual direct administrative costs incurred by counties related to effectively implementing the new law.

- (q) Ensure that the General Fund and other funds of the State are held harmless by reimbursing the State for reductions in tax revenue caused by the deductibility of the property tax.

SEC. 4. Section 8.7 of Article XVI of the California Constitution is added to read:

SEC. 8.7. (a) The Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund is hereby created in the State Treasury, to be held in trust, and is continuously appropriated for the support of local education agencies as that term is defined in section 421 of the Education Code as that statute read on January 1, 2020, and for the support of community college districts. The moneys deposited in the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund shall be held in trust for schools, and shall be distributed as follows:

(1) Eleven percent of the moneys shall be allocated by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges to community college districts in proportion to the funding calculated for each district pursuant to the distribution formulas operative in statute as of January 1, 2020, or any successor statute, provided that property tax revenues calculated pursuant to section 84751 of the Education Code, or any successor statute, that exceed the total funding calculated for a district pursuant to the then-operative distribution formulas shall be subtracted from that district's proportionate share of the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund.

(2) Eighty-nine percent of the moneys shall be allocated by the Superintendent of Public Instruction to school districts, charter schools and county offices of education as follows:

(A) To school districts and charter schools, in proportion to each school district or charter school's total funding calculated pursuant to subdivisions (a)-(i), inclusive, of section 42238.02 of the Education Code, as those provisions read on July 1, 2019. Any school district or charter school that qualifies as a "basic aid school district" or "excess tax entity" under subdivision (o) of that section shall have subtracted from its proportionate share of the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund the amount by which the sum calculated in subdivision (j) of that section exceeds the amount calculated pursuant to subdivisions (a)-(i), inclusive, as each of those provisions read on July 1, 2019.

(B) To county offices of education, in proportion to each office's total funding calculated pursuant to section 2574 of the Education Code as that section read on July 1, 2019.

(3) Notwithstanding the above, no school district or charter school shall receive from the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund less than \$100 per unit of average daily attendance, adjusted annually upward or downward by the same percentage that the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund grew or declined from the previous year, and no community college district shall receive from the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund less than \$100 per enrolled full time equivalent student, adjusted annually upward or downward by the same percentage that the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund grew or declined from the previous year.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, the moneys deposited in the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund shall not be subject to appropriation, reversion, or

transfer by the Legislature, the Governor, the Director of Finance, or the Controller for any purpose other than those specified in this section, nor shall these revenues be loaned to the General Fund or any other fund of the State or any local government fund.

(c) Moneys allocated to local education agencies, as that term is defined in section 421 of the Education Code as that statute read on January 1, 2020, and to community college districts from the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund shall supplement, and shall not replace, other funding for education. Funds deposited into or allocated from the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund shall not be part of “total allocations to school districts and community college districts from General Fund proceeds of taxes appropriated pursuant to Article XIII B and allocated local proceeds of taxes” for purposes of paragraphs (2) and (3) of subdivision (b) of Section 8 of this Article or for purposes of Section 21 of this Article. Except as provided in subdivision (c) of Section 8.6 of this Article, revenues generated by Section 2.5 of Article XIII A shall not be deemed to be General Fund revenues which may be appropriated pursuant to Article XIII B for purposes of paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 8 of this Article, nor shall they be considered in the determination of per capita General Fund revenues for purposes of subdivisions (b) and (e) of Section 8 of this Article.

(d) Revenues generated by Section 2.5 of Article XIII A shall not be deemed to be General Fund proceeds of taxes that may be appropriated pursuant to Article XIII B for purposes of Section 20 or Section 21 of this Article.

SEC. 5. Section 8.6 of Article XVI of the California Constitution is added to read:

SEC. 8.6. (a) The Legislature shall provide by statute a methodology for determining the additional revenue generated in each county each fiscal year as a result of the application of the tax rate specified in subdivision (a) of Section 1 of Article XIII A and the application of Section 2.5 of Article XIII A. The determination as to the amount of additional revenue in each county shall be transmitted to the county auditor annually for use for the calculations required by this section.

(b) After transferring the necessary funds pursuant to subdivisions (c) and (d) of this section, the additional revenue resulting from the application of the tax rate specified in subdivision (a) of Section 1 of Article XIII A and the application of Section 2.5 of Article XIII A shall be allocated and transferred by the county auditor as follows:

(1) First, to the Local School and Community College Property Tax Fund created pursuant to Section 8.7 of this Article, in an amount equal to the school entities’ share of property taxes as determined pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 95) of Part 0.5 of Division 1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, as that chapter read on January 1, 2020.

(2) Second, among cities, counties, and special districts pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 95) of Part 0.5 of Division 1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, as that chapter read on January 1, 2020.

(c) The Franchise Tax Board shall determine the reduction to the General Fund and any other affected state fund of revenues derived from the taxes imposed by the Personal Income Tax Law (Part 10 (commencing with Section 17001) of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code) and the Corporation Tax Law (Part 11 (commencing with Section 23001) of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code), as those laws read on January 1, 2020, due to the deduction of any net increase in property taxes resulting from the implementation of Section 2.5 of Article XIII A and subdivision (a) of Section 3.1 of Article XIII. The amount of reduction as determined by the Franchise Tax Board shall be transferred by the county auditor to the General Fund and any other affected state fund prior to the allocation specified in subdivision (b). For purposes of making the determinations required by Section 8, 20 and 21 of this Article, the amount transferred to the General Fund pursuant to this subdivision shall be deemed to be General Fund revenues which may be appropriated pursuant to Article XIII B and General Fund proceeds of taxes appropriated pursuant to Article XIII B, and shall be included in the calculation of per capita General Fund revenues. The amount transferred pursuant to this subdivision shall for each fiscal year be apportioned among the counties in proportion to each county's contribution to the total additional revenue resulting from the application of Section 2.5 of Article XIII A determined for all counties.

(d) Each county or city and county shall be annually compensated for the actual direct administrative costs of implementing Section 2.5 of Article XIII A as identified by the board of supervisors of the county or city and county consistent with statutes identifying those costs. The Legislature may determine by statute what constitutes actual direct administrative costs for purposes of this subdivision. Such costs shall at a minimum include the costs of assessment, assessment appeals, legal counsel, tax allocation and distribution, and auditing and enforcement of the provisions of Section 3.1 of Article XIII and Section 2.5 of Article XIII A.

(e) All local education agencies, community colleges, counties, cities and counties, cities, and special districts that receive funds from the revenues generated by Section 2.5 of Article XIII A shall publicly disclose for each fiscal year, including in their annual budgets, the amount of property tax revenues they received for that fiscal year as the result of Section 2.5 of Article XIII A and how those revenues were spent. Such disclosure shall be made so that it is widely available to the public and written so as to be easily understood.

SEC. 6. Section 2.5 of Article XIII A of the California Constitution is added to read:

SEC. 2.5. (a) (1) Notwithstanding Section 2 of this Article, for the lien date for the 2022-23 fiscal year and each lien date thereafter, the "full cash value" of commercial and industrial real property that is not otherwise exempt under the Constitution is the fair market value of such real property as of that date as determined by the county assessor of the county in which such real property is located, except as provided by the Legislature pursuant to subdivision (b).

(2) Paragraph (1) shall not apply to residential property as defined in this section, whether it is occupied by a homeowner or a renter. Residential property as defined in this section shall be assessed as required by Section 2 of this Article. Paragraph (1) shall also not apply to real

property used for commercial agricultural production as defined in this section. Real property used for commercial agricultural production as defined in this section shall be assessed as required by Section 2 of this Article.

(b) The Legislature, after conferring with county assessors, shall provide by statute for the phase-in of the reassessment of commercial and industrial real property as required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (a). Any such phase-in shall provide for reassessment of a percentage of all commercial and industrial real properties within each county commencing with the lien date for the 2022-23 fiscal year and extending over two or more lien dates each fiscal year thereafter, in order to ensure a reasonable workload and implementation period for county assessors, including provision for processing and timing of assessment appeals. An owner shall first be obligated to pay the taxes based on the new assessed value beginning with the lien date for the fiscal year when the county assessor has completed the reassessment. The phase-in also shall provide taxpayers whose property has been reassessed a reasonable timeframe within which to pay any increase in taxes. After the initial reassessment of commercial and industrial real property pursuant to this subdivision, such commercial and industrial real property shall be periodically reassessed no less frequently than every three years as determined by the Legislature. Notwithstanding existing statutes, the Legislature shall, in consultation with county assessors, develop an expedited process for hearing appeals resulting from the reassessment of properties pursuant to this section that does not include automatic acceptance of the applicant's opinion of values within a given time frame; provided, however, that the Legislature shall maintain the existing role of local administrative hearing bodies such as assessment appeals boards as being subject only to traditional principles of appellate review in the trial and appellate courts.

(c) For purposes of this section:

(1) "Commercial and industrial real property" means any real property that is used as commercial or industrial property, or is vacant land not zoned for residential use and not used for commercial agricultural production. For purposes of this paragraph, vacant land shall not include real property that is used or protected for open space, a park, or the equivalent designation for land essentially free of structures, natural in character to provide opportunities for recreation and education, and intended to preserve scenic, cultural, or historic values.

(2) "Mixed-use real property" means real property on which both residential and commercial or industrial uses are permitted.

(3) "Real property used for commercial agricultural production" means land that is used for producing commercial agricultural commodities.

(4)(A) "Residential property" shall include real property used as residential property, including both single-family and multi-unit structures, and the land on which those structures are constructed or placed.

(B) The Legislature shall provide by statute that any property zoned as commercial or industrial but used as long-term residential property shall be classified as residential for purposes of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a). For mixed-use real property, the Legislature shall ensure only that portion of the property that is used for commercial and industrial purposes shall be subject to reassessment as required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (a). The Legislature shall

also define and provide by statute that limited commercial uses of residential property, such as home offices, home-based businesses or short-term rentals, shall be classified as residential for purposes of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a).

(d) (1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subdivision, commercial and industrial real property with a fair market value of three million dollars (\$3,000,000) or less shall not be subject to reassessment pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of this section. The amount specified in this paragraph shall be adjusted for inflation every two years commencing January 1, 2025, as determined by the State Board of Equalization. The State Board of Equalization shall calculate the adjustment separately for each county taking into consideration differences in average commercial and industrial market values between counties.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1) of this subdivision, real property that would otherwise comply with the exemption set forth in paragraph (1) of this subdivision shall be subject to reassessment pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of this section if any of the direct or indirect beneficial owners of such real property own a direct or indirect beneficial ownership interest(s) in other commercial and/or industrial real property located in the State, which such real property in the aggregate (including the subject property) has a fair market value in excess of three million dollars (\$3,000,000). The amount specified in this paragraph shall be adjusted for inflation every two years commencing January 1, 2025, as determined by the State Board of Equalization.

(3) All determinations of fair market value under this subdivision shall be determined by the county assessor of the county in which the property is located.

(4) In order to be eligible for the exemption provided by paragraph (1) of this subdivision, the owner of the real property shall make a claim and certify annually to the county assessor under penalty of perjury that the conditions required by paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subdivision for exemption from reassessment have been met and shall be subject to audit by the county or the State as to that certification.

(5) Any real property exempt under paragraph (1) of this subdivision shall only be exempt from reassessment so long as it meets the conditions imposed by paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subdivision and if there is any change in the direct or indirect beneficial ownership of such real property, a new claim and certification must be made to the county assessor.

(e) (1) Provided fifty percent (50%) or more of the occupied square footage of a commercial or industrial real property is occupied by a small business as defined in paragraph (4) of this subdivision, the provisions of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of this section shall not take effect prior to the lien date for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, provided, however, that if the Legislature establishes by statute pursuant to subdivision (b) of this section that a real property qualified under this paragraph shall be reassessed on a lien date subsequent to the 2025-2026 fiscal year, then such property shall be reassessed commencing on that subsequent lien date.

(2) In order to be eligible for the exemption provided by paragraph (1) of this subdivision, the owner of the property shall make a claim and certify annually to the county assessor under penalty of perjury that the conditions required by paragraph (1) of this subdivision for exemption from reassessment have been met and shall be subject to audit by the county or the state as to that certification.

(3) Any real property for which reassessment is deferred under paragraph (1) of this subdivision shall only be eligible for deferral so long as it meets the conditions imposed by paragraph (1) of this subdivision and if there is any change in the direct or indirect beneficial ownership of such real property, a new claim and certification must be made to the county assessor. Upon termination of the deferral the property will be subject to paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of this section.

(4) For purposes of this subdivision the term small business shall include only those businesses which meet all of the following conditions:

(A) The business has 50 or fewer annual full-time equivalent employees in the state.

(B) The business is independently owned and operated such that the business ownership interests, management and operation are not subject to control, restriction, modification or limitation by an outside source, individual or another business.

(C) The business is located in California.

(D) The owner and officers of the business are residents of the State.

(E) The business is not dominant in its field of operations such that the business exercises or has the ability to exercise a controlling or major influence, on a statewide basis, in the activity or field of operation of the business.

(f) The failure in any year to claim, in a manner required by the laws in effect at the time the claim is required to be made, an exemption or classification which reduces or defers a property tax shall be deemed a waiver of the exemption or classification for that year.

(g) Using the methodology prescribed by the Legislature pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 8.6 of Article XVI, the percentage change in gross taxable assessed valuation within a city, county, or a city and county used to calculate an entity's vehicle license fee adjustment amount pursuant to Section 97.70 of the Revenue and Taxation Code shall not include the additional assessed valuation that results from the application of this section.

SEC. 7. Section 3.1 of Article XIII of the California Constitution is added to read:

SEC. 3.1. (a) (1) For each taxpayer paying the tax on tangible personal property, including business equipment and fixtures, used for business purposes, either of the following shall apply:

(A) (i) For a taxpayer that is a small business, as defined in paragraph (4) of subdivision (e) of section 2.5 of Article XIII A, all tangible personal property owned and used for business purposes is exempt from taxation.

(ii) A taxpayer shall make a claim and certify annually to the county assessor under penalty of perjury that the condition required by this subparagraph for exemption has been met and shall be subject to audit by the county or the state as to that certification.

(B) Except for a taxpayer subject to subparagraph (A), an amount of up to five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) of tangible personal property per taxpayer is exempt from taxation.

(2) Fixtures shall be included as tangible personal property subject to this exemption, but aircraft and vessels shall not be included.

(3) The Legislature shall not lower the exemption amounts provided by this subdivision or change their application, but may increase the exemption amount specified in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) consistent with the authority enumerated in Section 2 of this Article.

(b) The Legislature shall provide by statute that all related entities, including but not limited to any subsidiaries, holding companies, or parent corporations, are considered one “taxpayer” for the purposes of this section.

SEC. 8. Section 16 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution is added to read:

SEC. 16. (a) For purposes of this article, “proceeds of taxes” shall not include the additional revenues generated by Section 2.5 of Article XIII A.

(b) For purposes of this article, appropriations subject to limitation of each entity of government shall not include appropriations of the additional revenues collected as a result of the implementation of Section 2.5 of Article XIII A.

SEC. 9. Effective Date.

This measure shall become operative on January 1, 2022, except that subdivision (a) of Section 3.1 of Article XIII shall become operative on January 1, 2024.

SEC. 10. Severability

The provisions of this Act are severable. If any portion, section, subdivision, paragraph, clause, sentence, phrase, word, or application of this Act is for any reason held to be invalid by a decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, that decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Act. The People of the State of California hereby declare that they would have adopted this Act and each and every portion, section, subdivision, paragraph, clause, sentence, phrase, word, and application not declared invalid or unconstitutional without regard to whether any portion of this Act or application thereof would be subsequently declared invalid. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Section 7 of this Act is non-severable from Section 6 of this Act.