

# AB 760 (Gordon)

## Healthy Start Community Schools

### SUMMARY

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AB 760 would make a number of improvements to the Healthy Start program, including: 1) renaming the program the Healthy Start Community Schools Program, 2) requiring a rigorous planning process to ensure long term partnerships and sustainability, 3) requiring additional commitments from applicant school districts, 4) requiring partnerships with county organizations (e.g., Health and Human Services) and closer alignment with other children's and family support initiatives, and 5) revamping the program outcomes and evaluation process.

### BACKGROUND

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In 1991, the California State Legislature passed Senate Bill 620, the Healthy Start Support Services for Children Act (SB 620). Led by Governor Pete Wilson and Senator Robert Presley, the bill was a bipartisan effort to boost student learning by helping children and families access a comprehensive array of learning supports. Rather than prescribe specific services, Healthy Start provided one-time seed money to local education agencies (LEAs) to help children and their families gain access to learning supports through community-school partnerships and school-linked services. Healthy Start has proven to be a solid investment for California. Grantees have improved outcomes for children and their families and over 80% of Healthy Start sites sustained their services beyond state grant funding.<sup>1</sup> Healthy Start reflects what is now known as a community

schools approach, and has served as a strong model for the nation.

This community schools approach is regaining momentum across the country. Policymakers, advocates and researchers have identified the community schools approach as a key to addressing the complex roots of our persistent achievement gap dilemma. By offering a comprehensive array of services as well as high quality classroom instruction, schools can address barriers to learning in a multi-faceted manner. Today, twenty years after the passage of Healthy Start, need has increased while public resources have decreased. Coupled with the realignment of additional state services to the local level, this gap has made the resources and systems change associated with the community schools approach even more critical to ensuring the educational success of California's students.

### THIS BILL

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Despite its achievements, Healthy Start was never brought to scale as a school-reform strategy. This bill would address some deficiencies of the Healthy Start program, and provide a better framework for encouraging community school efforts.

While refunding the Healthy Start program may be impossible given the current budget situation, a bill to make program changes to Healthy Start will lay important groundwork for when funding is again available, and initiate a critical reexamination of the positive impacts of delivering learning

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Education, 2001.

supports and other services on school campuses.

## **SUPPORT**

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Partnership for Children and Youth  
(co-sponsor)  
California School Health Centers  
Association (co-sponsor)

## **OPPOSITION**

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None received

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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