



Assembly Member **SANDRÉ SWANSON**

News Release

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## Swanson Wants Return Of \$500,000 To Oakland Schools

*Bill To Make Charters Pay Fair Share Passes Assembly Education Committee*

[AB 980 Fact Sheet](#) (PDF) | [Superintendent's Charter School Memo](#) (PDF)

(Sacramento) – On February 3rd, State Superintendent of Instruction Jack O’Connell ordered State Administrator Vincent Matthews to transfer \$60 per student from Oakland’s general fund to the 32 charter schools within the district. The transfer totaled nearly \$500,000. In response, Assemblymember Sandré R. Swanson (D-Alameda) introduced AB 980, which would place responsibility on charter schools in the district to pay their fair share of Oakland’s still outstanding state loan. The bill passed the Assembly Education Committee today on a 6-2 vote.

“Although Oakland schools are making significant academic advances, we are still struggling, under a heavy financial burden from the state loan. In fact, students in traditional public schools are shouldering the entire burden, while charter schools are not responsible for paying anything. It is absolutely unfair to Oakland parents for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to take \$60 per student and give it to charter schools, and not expect them to pay their fair share. I strongly urge him to return the funds,” Assemblymember Swanson stated.

Oakland Unified School District has been under State receivership since a financial collapse forced it to take out a loan from the State in 2003. While certain areas of authority have been returned to the district, financial management is still under the control of the State Superintendent of Instruction.

The Superintendent’s transfer of funds appeared to be unilateral. During the course of the hearing, California Charter Schools Association representative Branche Jones testified that the Association had never requested the funds.

Under the provisions of the bill, charter schools would be charged a prorated amount, based on the number of students enrolled at the school. The formula is based on one currently employed at the Oakland Unified School District, which has signed contracts with approximately one third of its charter schools to help share responsibility for the loan repayment. Estimates by the Assembly Education committee show that the district would recover approximately \$1 million per year from its charter schools if the bill were signed into law.

Oakland Interim Superintendent of Schools Roberta Mayor testified before the committee on the bill’s potential impact to the district. “The bill would definitely assist Oakland schools, because it would make the entire community share in both the assets and the liabilities of the district,” she stated.

Board of Trustees member Jody London also spoke on the bill. “I agree with the Superintendent. If you’re a school in the Oakland Unified School District, and you’re receiving public funds, then you need to help pay back the loan to the state,” she declared.

“The fact that charters do not have to pay their fair share, coupled with the State Superintendent’s move to transfer funds from the district, creates a distinct inequity that privileges a minority at the

expense of the majority of children in our community. AB 980 will spread the burden of the debt equally, help ensure that the district can make its payments and continue to move towards fiscal recovery, while continuing to provide a quality education,” Assemblymember Swanson concluded.

AB 980 would also apply to other districts with outstanding state loans. These currently include Vallejo City Unified School District, West Contra Costa Unified School District, and West Fresno Elementary School District.

Assemblymember Swanson concluded by stating, “This entire issue is about fairness. Given the challenges that our schools face in this current economic crisis, we cannot afford such a costly transfer of resources.”

The bill now moves to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. A hearing date has not been set.

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