

Attachment #4

Environmental Charter 1st
Appeal

Davis, Ian

From: Farnaz Golshani-Flechner <farnaz@ecsonline.org>
Sent: Thursday, December 6, 2018 2:36 PM
To: Davis, Ian; Johantgen, Katrina; SB740
Cc: Alison Diaz; Dorothy Lee
Subject: ECMSG CSFA - SB740 Appeal

Dear Ms. Johantgen:

We hope this letter finds you well. Pursuant to Title 4, Division 15, Article 1.15 of the California Code of Regulations ("CCR") Section 10170.10(b), this letter serves as Environmental Charter Middle School - Gardena's ("ECMSG") appeal of the California School Finance Authority's ("CSFA") staff determination regarding ECMSG's alleged ineligibility for SB740 funding dollars for "costs associated with the facility" for the 2017-18 school year.

ECMSG is a middle school (grades 6-8) founded in 2010 in South Los Angeles that offers students a small, caring school environment supporting their transition from elementary school to a college preparatory high school. The ECMS approach creates strong relationships between students, teachers and families. Our rigorous academic program prepares students for a college-prep high school and places an emphasis on social responsibility.

The campus is located in Gardena. The building was formerly abandoned and a neighborhood blight, filled with squatters and illicit activity. Gangs are very active in the area. Our school has taken this abandoned building and turned it into a thriving community space, with a beautiful playground, composting and gardens, vibrant classrooms, and activities for the whole community such as our Green Up Days and our Harvest Festival.

Our students are predominantly Latino and African American, roughly 20% English Learners, 16% SPED, and 92% qualify for free and reduced lunch. Our campus provides a safe, clean, and nurturing space for students and families in need.



A major source of funding that helps our school provide this haven for our community is the SB740 program. And in 2017-18, there was much to be celebrated as the funding was increased dramatically. However, unfortunately, leadership changed at our network level just before the application was due. Tracy Bondi, the former Director of Finance & Operations of Environmental Charter Schools ("ECS"), was transitioning out of her role due to her pregnancy, and went into labor, several weeks earlier than expected. As such, she was unable to assist in oversight of the application process. As the incoming COO, I started officially on June 20, 2018, but due to Tracy's early departure, I was not trained on this increase.

Also complicating the process was the fact that the school faced leadership transitions. The Principal of ECMSG resigned his position in October 2017 and his permanent replacement did not start in her post until July of 2018. As such, she also was unable to support the oversight process for the school's expenses application.



Ms. Santos, our facilities and sustainability manager, was not aware that the allocation amount had been greatly increased in 2017-18 and thus did not submit for additional expenses. In prior years, the school did not submit for additional expenses due to the prior lower funding levels. When she received the funding true up award notice on 11/8/18, she became aware of this tremendous loss in funding and brought this issue to our attention.

This approximately \$90,000 that the school was eligible to receive is of great importance to us. It was already budgeted to be received, and not receiving it will be a financial hardship for the school. We expect that if we are unable to fill this gap in our budget, we will not be able to hire an additional math teaching position that was budgeted for the 2018/19 and 19/20 school years. Improving math performance has been a primary focus for this campus; as such, an additional teacher was planned for in order to further support students in math proficiency levels and to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio. However, if SB740 funds are not present to support the facility expenditures as expected, then the supplementary math teacher hire would have to be further delayed in order to use general funds to pay for basic facility costs.

We greatly appreciate your consideration and assure you that we expect this to be a one time issue due to multiple extenuating circumstances. We are truly grateful for your partnership and support. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information, to support your decision making process.

Sincerely,

Farnaz Golshani Flechner
Chief Operating Officer
Environmental Charter Schools
[2625 Manhattan Beach Blvd. Suite 100](https://www.ecsonline.org)
[Redondo Beach, CA 90278](https://www.ecsonline.org)
O: 310-214-3408
www.ecsonline.org

- [_ECMSG Appeal CSFA 12.4.18.pdf](#) 
- [_ECMSG Appeal CSFA Wizard Invoices.pdf](#) 
- [_ECMSG SB740 17-18 Additional Expenses Wizard.xlsx](#) 