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Orland Joint Unified SD

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March 24, 2008

Mary D. Nichols, Chair
Air Resources Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Agenda Item 083-3-4
School Bus Program

Dear Chair Nichols:

The Small School Districts' Association (SSDA) is writing in opposition to the staff proposal regarding the allocation of \$200 million in school bus replacement funds authorized by Proposition 1B. The staff is recommending that there be a \$25,000 match for each school bus a school district would receive under Proposition 1B and a \$140,000 cap on the total amount that would be spent per bus.

The Governor's proposed 2008-09 State Budget for K-12 education includes an absolute reduction in per pupil funding between 2007-08 and 2008-09. At a time when school districts are laying off personnel and cutting or eliminating programs, it is impractical to expect those school districts to also find funds for a school bus replacement match.

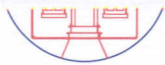
For many small school districts, a \$25,000 match would be equal to half of their mandated budget reserves. The smaller the school district the greater percentage of the small school district's budget will have to be provided for this match. Small school districts mean small budgets, but the same dollar match for each bus results in higher cost to the discretionary funds available in small school districts.

SSDA is very concerned about the staff proposed cap of \$140,000 for each replaced school bus. We believe this cap will not sufficiently meet the true cost of purchasing the highest quality, most fuel efficient, air quality efficient diesel buses, much less the real cost of CNG school buses. We believe there should not be a cap and instead the allocation should be the full cost of the school bus as intended by the voters with the enactment of Proposition 1B.

**Don Brann, Emeritus
and Superintendent**
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Small School Districts' Association

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Finally, we believe more than 75% of the \$200 million of Proposition 1B should be used for school bus replacement. This will maximize pupil safety, as well as maximizing air quality improvement and cost efficiencies. We believe the material provided to the voters on Proposition 1B included the belief that almost all of these funds would be for school bus replacement rather than for other purposes.

SSDA urges the Air Resources Board to modify the staff recommendation and reject the match, increase or remove the cap, and reserve at least 75% of the Proposition 1B funds for school bus replacement.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David L. Walrath

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ORIGINAL.

Copies:

Board Clerk

Executive Officer

Chair

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