

[Letter of Support for SB 341 to Support School Garden Infrastructure]

**Motion to urge the Board of Supervisors and Mayor to support Senate Bill 341**

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Youth Commission is a chartered body in the City and County of San Francisco that represents the needs and voices of youth; and

WHEREAS, SB 341 creates a statewide plan to expand, promote, create, and support school garden infrastructure by moving the Instructional School Gardens Program under the Department of Food and Agriculture, establishing the Instructional School Gardens and Maintenance Fund in the State Treasury, and forming a statewide advisory working group to develop a grant process that provides funding for garden-based instruction at school sites; and

WHEREAS, SB 341 lays the foundation for sustainable school garden funding, ensures equitable access to school gardens, and supports Career Technical Education (CTE) programs preparing students for careers in agriculture, environmental sciences, and nutrition; and

WHEREAS, School gardens provide environmental, health, and learning benefits, increasing students' connection to and sense of responsibility for the environment, deepening understanding of healthy eating habits, providing shade coverage during extreme heat, and encouraging greater physical activity and mental health, among other benefits; and

WHEREAS, In California, only 50% of school districts have school gardens – 72% of which are in higher-income census districts; and

WHEREAS, 91% of existing school gardens are unused due to lack of funding for instruction and maintenance; and

1 WHEREAS, California's Instructional School Garden Program (ISGP) was  
2 underfunded and unused during the Great Recession and COVID-19 pandemic, which  
3 led to deteriorated garden maintenance, increased financial burdens for families relying  
4 on school gardens as a source of fresh produce, and significantly reduced student  
5 access to hands-on garden education after the Covid-19 Pandemic; and

6 WHEREAS, In the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), according to  
7 a survey conducted by Abraham Lincoln High School's Green Academy program, while  
8 over 93% of all schools have gardens, only 62% of elementary schools, 36% of middle  
9 schools, and 35% of high schools have a designated garden educator, leading to under-  
10 maintenance and under-utilization; and

11 WHEREAS, 24.7% of SFUSD high school students, accounting for 3,791  
12 students, are in a Career Technical Education Pathway and 14.4% of those students  
13 are in an environmental pathway, preparing them for careers in agriculture;  
14 environmental science, engineering, and policy; and environmental social justice; and

15 WHEREAS, Supporting SB 341 directly aligns with San Francisco's Climate  
16 Action Plan goals to ensure racial and social equity in climate resilience, such that low-  
17 income communities have access to more green spaces and fresh, local produce  
18 through school gardens; reduce the effects of the urban heat island effect; and achieve  
19 net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040; and

20 WHEREAS, School garden education leads to positive impact on student  
21 learning and eating habits: [Klemmer et al \(2005\)](#) demonstrated that third, fourth, and  
22 fifth graders who participated in garden activities scored significantly higher on science  
23 tests than students with typical classroom science lessons and [a 2017 study](#) conducted

1 by the Tisch Center for Food, Education, and Policy found that students ate 3 to 5 times  
2 more fruits and vegetables at schools offering “frequent, high-quality...hands-on”  
3 nutrition learning opportunities; and therefore be it

4       MOVED, that the San Francisco Youth Commission hereby urges the Mayor and  
5 Board of Supervisors to urge the California Legislature to support SB 341, ensuring that  
6 school garden education becomes more equitable and impactful.

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**Supplemental Information:**

See attached document [Letter of Support]

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April 7, 2025

Dear Senator Pérez,

Climate change is an escalating crisis. By 2100, children born in 2025 will endure 8-27 more extreme heat days and 3-6 feet of sea level rise. Youth are on the front lines, facing heightened risks of heat-related deaths, lung disease, and impaired brain development.

California lacks consistent, high quality environmental education for K-12 students. Despite AB 285 passing in March 2024, hands-on climate education which is fundamental to deepening students' understanding of climate change and giving them real-life applications of climate knowledge, remains absent. Although SB 341 does not provide funding for garden-based instruction and maintenance, it provides a new framework and policy guidance so that when funding is available from a range of sources, local education agencies will be eligible to apply for multi-year grants and integrate garden-based education into their instructional platform.

School garden education has tremendous benefits on student academic success, physical and mental health and wellness, and combating food insecurity and increasing green spaces – critical levers of climate resiliency. Beyond this, school garden education is instrumental in shaping student climate literacy. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration states that a core component of a comprehensive climate education must include



the integration of climate topics across disciplines, outdoor education, and exposure to green jobs. SB 341 directly aligns with this. With hands-on garden education, youth can have the necessary tools to face the challenges of climate change and steward Earth effectively. Therefore, we urge you to support SB 341 (Gonzales).

The Youth Commission is a body of 17 youth from San Francisco between the ages of 12 and 23. Created by the voters under a 1995 amendment to the City Charter, the commission is responsible for advising the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor on policies and laws related to young people. The Youth Commission is also charged with providing comment and recommendation on all proposed laws that would primarily affect youth before the Board takes final action.

The Youth Commission prioritizes climate literacy and resilience, working to address climate literacy for youth as shown in our 2024-2025 Budget and Policy Priorities. The Youth Commission believes that it is vital that all students are able to access garden education to build success in navigating the threats of climate change in the 21st century. Thank you for your continued leadership in California and supporting this pressing youth concern.

Sincerely,

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Jason Fong, Chair

Adopted 04/07/25

2025 – 2025 San Francisco Youth Commission