
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Senator Andreas Borgeas, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular

Bill No: SB 453 **Hearing Date:** 3/18/21
Author: Hurtado
Version: 3/10/21 Amended
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Reichel Everhart

Subject: Agriculture: Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund

SUMMARY:

This bill would create the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund. This bill would continuously appropriate \$700,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for allocation to the California State University Foundation for distribution to the Jordan Agricultural Research Center at California State University, Fresno, for purposes of supporting research on biosecurity and emerging infectious diseases relating to agriculture and mitigating the effects of emerging infectious diseases on meat, poultry, and other agricultural production. This bill would authorize the Fund to receive monies from federal, state, local, and private sources.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW:

Existing Law:

1. Appropriates monies to the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for emergency detection, investigation, or eradication of agricultural plant or animal pests or diseases and, at the discretion of the Secretary of Food and Agriculture, authorizes those moneys to be used for planning and research involving detection, investigation, eradication, and methods of quarantine compliance for agricultural plant or animal pests or diseases.
2. Requires the secretary to establish and administer a research program to control vertebrate pests that pose a significant threat to the welfare of the state's agricultural economy, infrastructure, and the public.
3. Provides for the establishment of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program to support competitive grants for research on the control of pests and diseases of agricultural importance through alternatives that reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides and petrochemicals and on the production, processing, and distribution of food and fiber in ways that consider the interactions among soil, plants, water, air, animals, tillage, machinery, labor, energy, and transportation to enhance agricultural efficiency, public health, and resource conservation.

PROPOSED LAW:

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund within the State Treasury.
- 2) States that \$700,000 be continuously appropriated from the General Fund to CDFRA for allocation to the CSU Foundation for distribution to the Jordan Agricultural Research Center at CSU, Fresno, for the establishment of the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund for the purpose of supporting research on biosecurity and emerging infectious diseases relating to agriculture and mitigating the effects of emerging infectious diseases on meat, poultry, and other agricultural production.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:

According to the author:

“The COVID-19 pandemic has shuttered businesses and schools, devastated families, and caught governments around the world unprepared. As of February 2021, it had infected over 110 million people worldwide and killed approximately 2.44 million. Many scientists are quite confident that it came to humans through an animal, specifically a bat. This was not the first dangerous disease that has passed from animals to humans and it will not be the last. The CDC estimates that 3 out of 4 emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals. Currently, there are 1.6 million undiscovered viruses circulating in the animal population, at least half of which have the potential to spread to humans. This is why I introduced SB 453. In the past, once we have conquered regional epidemics or smaller scale pandemics, collectively, we have simply moved on, we have let our focus lapse. We cannot do that this time. We must be prepared. SB 453 lays the groundwork to ensure California and the Nation are ready for the next global pandemic by allocating funds for research on biosecurity and emerging infectious disease. Studying and mapping future diseases, while improving our diagnostics is one way the State can move forward with an eye to future challenges that may already be headed our way.”

COMMENTS:

California State University Foundation: According to their website, the CSU Foundation was established in 1962 as a way to “enhance the educational excellence of the California State University in teaching, learning, community service, and applied research.”

Jordan Agricultural Research Center: According to their website, the Jordan Agricultural Research Center at CSU Fresno is a “world-class research center to discover and investigate the most advanced concepts and practices of agriculture, food, and natural resources.”

When asked what type of research is currently conducted by the Center, the author’s office stated, “The Center explores the latest advancements in agriculture and conducts applied research relevant to the regions agricultural issues and economy. The study of biosecurity and emerging infections disease is exactly that. Current research conducted by the Center includes several trials focused on water use efficiency via air injection, CO2 enrichment and advanced irrigation methods to improve crop yields, but individuals at the centers have expressed interest in pursuing research in the field of biosecurity and pandemic preparedness.”

The Senate Rules Committee has double referred this bill to the Senate Education Committee as the second committee of referral. Therefore, if this measure is approved by this committee, the motion should include an action to re-refer the bill to the Senate Committee on Education.

SUPPORT:

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None received

OPPOSITION:

None received

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