
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair

2021 - 2022 Regular

Bill No: SB 453 **Hearing Date:** April 7, 2021
Author: Hurtado
Version: March 10, 2021
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez

Subject: Agriculture: Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund and continuously appropriates \$700,000 from the fund to the Department of Food and Agriculture for allocation to the California State University (CSU) Foundation for distribution to the Jordan Agricultural Research and Education Program at CSU, Fresno for purposes of supporting research on biosecurity and emerging infectious diseases.

BACKGROUND

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the CSU and its various campuses under the administration of the Trustees of the CSU. (Education Code § 89000 et seq)
- 2) Appropriates monies to the Department of Food and Agriculture 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. (Food and Agriculture Code § 224 ((f)(1))
- 3) Requires the Secretary of Food and Agriculture 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. (Food and Agriculture Code § 6025.5)
- 4) Requests the University of California Regents to establish 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. (Food and Agriculture Code § 553 (a))

ANALYSIS

This bill establishes the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund, the moneys in which would be continuously appropriated to the Department of Food and Agriculture for allocation to the CSU Foundation for distribution to the Jordan Agricultural Research and Education Program at CSU, Fresno for purposes of supporting research on biosecurity and emerging infectious diseases. Specifically, it:

- 1) Establishes the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund (fund) within the State Treasury.
- 2) States that \$700,000 be continuously appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Food and Agriculture for allocation to the CSU Foundation for distribution to the Jordan Agricultural Research Center at CSU, 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 agriculture production.
- 3) Authorizes federal, state, local, and private sources to be received by the fund.
- 4) Specifies that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable with the meaning of the California Constitution because of the Jordan Agricultural Research Center at CSU, Fresno, a world-class research center at the flagship university in the top agricultural region in the world, is uniquely situated to investigate biosecurity and emerging infectious disease with experts in the fields of agriculture, engineering, science, and mathematics working together at this location.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** 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.”

- 2) **Why CSU, Fresno?** This bill designates an individual program within the 23-campus CSU system as recipient of ongoing state funds for biosecurity and emerging infectious disease research. Senate Education Committee staff understands based information obtain from CSU, in addition to Fresno, there are three CSU campuses (Pomona, Chico, and San Luis Obispo) with strong agricultural programs that can do that work. According to the author, the bill calls for special consideration of Fresno's research center because of its geographic location within the top agricultural region in the world, the campus is uniquely situated to investigate biosecurity and emerging infections disease with agriculture, engineering, science, and mathematics experts working together at this location. The committee may wish to consider whether broadening the bill is appropriate to provide other CSU campuses an opportunity to bid on this research initiative.
- 3) **Other research initiatives established in statute.** In prior years, the Legislature has acted to address a statewide need by funding various research initiatives primarily at the UC given its distinct research mission among the three public higher education institutions. Most recently, these initiatives include among others, the firearm violence research at UC, Davis, California mosquito surveillance and research at UC, Davis and dyslexia research at UC, San Francisco. At CSU, specialized centers, not necessarily research driven, have been codified by the Legislature. Examples include, the Keneth L. Maddy Institute for leadership in government at CSU, Fresno and the Mervyn M. Dymally African American Political and Economic Institute at CSU, Dominguez Hills. The bill provides on-going funding for research at a CSU campus.
- 4) **About the Jordan Agricultural Research Center.** The Jordan Agricultural Research Center is housed at CSU Fresno. Scientists conduct research on agricultural practices, and post-harvest processing. Food and beverage products tested including wine, fresh fruit, dessert products in development by students for commercial purposes and targeted consumer products developed by faculty.
- 5) **Heard by the Senate Agriculture Committee.** This bill was heard by the Senate Agriculture Committee on March 18, where it passed on a 5-0 vote.

SUPPORT

Biotechnology Innovation Organization

OPPOSITION

None received.

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