
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anthony Portantino, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular Session

SB 453 (Hurtado) - Agriculture: Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund

Version: March 10, 2021

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: April 19, 2021

Policy Vote: AGRI. 5 - 0, ED. 7 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Robert Ingenito

Bill Summary: SB 453 would (1) establish the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund, and (2) continuously appropriate \$700,000 from the Fund to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) 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.

Fiscal Impact: This bill would result in a one-time appropriation of \$700,000 to CDFA, which would be allocated as specified. CDFA would incur minor and absorbable costs.

Background: Current law (1) appropriates funds to CDFA for emergency detection, investigation, or eradication of agricultural plant or animal pests or diseases and, at the discretion of the Secretary, (2) 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. Additionally, existing law 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.

The author notes that COVID-19 originated in an animal (likely a bat) and was then transmitted to humans. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that three out of four 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.

Proposed Law: This bill, among other things, would do the following: (1) establish the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund within the State Treasury, and (2) continuously appropriated \$700,000 from the General Fund to CDFA for allocation to the CSU Foundation for distribution to the Jordan Agricultural Research Center at CSU, Fresno, 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.

Staff Comments: Staff notes that available information indicates that, in addition to CSU Fresno, three other campuses amongst the 23 in the CSU system (Chico, Pomona and San Luis Obispo) are positioned to support the research addressed by this bill.

Recommended Amendments: Staff recommends deleting the continuous appropriation, as it reduces legislative oversight.

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