

Date of Hearing: July 16, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 345 (Hurtado) – As Introduced February 12, 2025

Policy Committee: Emergency Management

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: >

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to establish and collect fees associated with the California Fire Service Training and Education Program (Program) and California Fire and Arson Training Act (Act) only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources are insufficient to cover the necessary costs of Program and Act activities, instead of generally authorizing the SFM to establish and collect such fees.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Cost pressures of an unknown, but potentially significant, amount to the state by limiting the authority of the SFM to collect specified fees only when state appropriations and other funding sources cannot cover the costs, thus signaling that such appropriations are a legislative priority (General Fund). The California State Fire Training (SFT) division within the SFM does not generally receive state budget appropriations, as the program is fully funded through user fees.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

A fully staffed and well trained firefighting force is essential to successfully combating fires in the state. However, rising training fees can deter individuals from choosing a career in the fire service. SB 345 aims to address rising training costs by permitting the [SFM] to accept additional funding sources for the [Program]...California cannot afford to let high training costs stand in the way of public safety.

This bill is sponsored by the California Fire Chiefs Association and the Fire Districts Association of California and supported by various local fire departments and districts.

2) **Fire Training Historically Supported by Participant Fees.** The SFT division within the SFM establishes, develops, and delivers standardized training and education for the California fire service, with over 10,000 paid and volunteer firefighters participating in these programs every year. Although the Program originally began under the California Department of Education, the Program transferred to the SFM in 1978 to provide a self-supporting training infrastructure for California's fire service paid for by participant fees.

The SFT collects fees for services provided, including issuing course diplomas, applying for certification, taking certification exams, and accrediting training academies.

In September 2019, a sub-group of the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee (STEAC) was formed to update SFT fees based on historical system use. The sub-group's proposed fees were then approved by the full STEAC and the State Board of Fire Service, before a rulemaking package went through the Office of Administrative Law process to be codified into the California Code of Regulations. The SFT implemented the fee adjustments in January 2021. This bill allows such fees to be collected only if state appropriations and other funding sources are insufficient to cover the necessary costs of Program and Act activities.

- 3) **Prior Legislation.** SB 577 (Hurtado), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, was substantially similar to this bill. After passing this committee's suspense file, SB 577 was amended to address an unrelated issue.

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