

## MITIGATING EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 6, 1989

*Reviewed and deemed relevant by Board of Managers August  
2020*

- WHEREAS, The third Object of PTA is “to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth;” and
- WHEREAS, The California State Legislature has mandated standards for the construction of public schools, commonly known as the Field Act, the requirements of which have been revised numerous times to make them more stringent; and
- WHEREAS, The revisions made subsequent to the 1971 Sylmar earthquake for the first time imposed significant constraints on the lateral motions permitted in school structures; and
- WHEREAS, Existing public school structures, which were in compliance with the Field Act at the time of their construction, are not required to meet the more stringent current standards; and
- WHEREAS, Public school structures built to Field Act standards in the 1940’s and 1950’s have been shown to be vulnerable to severe non-structural hazards such as flying glass and falling light fixtures; and
- WHEREAS, The rationale for the PTA position in support of Proposition 79, “School Facilities Bond Act of 1988,” stated, in part: Many of our schools do not meet earthquake safety standards; and
- WHEREAS, The Seismic Safety Commission in “California at Risk, Reducing Earthquake Hazards 1987 to 1992,” a plan requested by the legislature in 1985, has recommended in “Initiative 1.4” that early Field Act public schools be reviewed and corrected as indicated; and
- WHEREAS, The cost of mitigating these hazards is a one-time expense which has been estimated to be in the vicinity of \$100 per student; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to seek immediate action by school districts to promote public awareness of the serious non-structural hazards such as flying glass and falling light fixtures which may exist in their schools; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to seek immediate action by school districts to apply cost-effective mitigation to already identified earthquake hazards on a risk-prioritized basis; and be it further

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**RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge the California State Legislature to enact legislation funding Initiative 1.4 of the Seismic Safety Commission's report, "California at Risk," to the end that the Office of the State Architect may be able to identify those schools which are at risk; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge the California State Legislature to enact legislation providing funds so that the State Office of Local Assistance may reimburse school districts for performing cost-effective earthquake hazard mitigation where hazards are identified.

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### **BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

In the event of a magnitude six or greater quake a large number of children in public schools in the State of California are exposed to risks of serious bodily injury and death, should the quake strike while school is in session. While there may be some instances of structural collapse, it may be shown that the greatest risks are from the explosive failure of windows, from falling light fixtures and from the toppling of unsecured massive objects.

Shortly after the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, the California Legislature passed the Field Act which required that the structural drawings for all public schools be reviewed and approved by the Office of the State Architect. The requirements which have to be satisfied are embodied in the California Administrative Code and have been revised numerous times over the last 55 years as deficiencies have been revealed.

Part of the rationale for the PTA position in support of Proposition 79 was to provide money for the mitigation of earthquake hazards in public schools. This should provide a source of funds to start reimbursing local school districts for the expense of performing indicated earthquake hazard mitigation.

It is the responsibility of the Legislature to provide the funds to ensure the safety of students in public schools. It is within the scope of PTA to educate parents and community leaders as to the needs in order to provide the legislators with the support they need to accomplish the difficult task of providing the needed funds. These ends will be furthered by the adoption of this resolution.