Reliance on local funding for school facilities limits heat action and privileges wealthier districts with greater administrative capacity.

Limited funding leads districts to push back necessary maintenance and improvements. State facilities funding has local match requirements and a first-come, first-served approach that leads to inequitable outcomes. With the need to raise funds through property taxes and local bond measures, districts most in need of cooling upgrades may have the least capacity to apply for and administer the funding.

Existing state programs can fund school heat management, but they are not specifically intended to address heat and therefore may be used for other priorities.

WHAT CAN THE STATE DO?

Collaborate with researchers to analyze needs and opportunities to establish long-term funding dedicated to heat mitigation for schools.

» Prioritize the most heat-vulnerable schools based on local climate, lack of cooling equipment and shade, and socioeconomic disadvantages. The Healthy Places Index: Extreme Heat Edition tool can help prioritize schools.

» Facilitate funding access for heat-vulnerable schools. Improve and target technical support and consider expanding formula funding to avoid application processes that disadvantage low-resourced school districts.

» Prioritize energy efficiency by requiring and funding the installation of heat pumps whenever possible. Link funding for cooling systems and energy efficiency upgrades; encourage schools to holistically upgrade and weatherize buildings.

» Remove barriers that prevent schools from maintaining and repairing installed equipment and infrastructure.

38% of districts lack sufficient local property wealth to generate funds to address basic facility needs.

Between 1998 and 2020, the top 25% of districts by income received more than four times as much local funding as the bottom 25%.

Between 1998 and 2021, white students received an average of $700+ more in School Facilities Program funds than Black and Latinx students.

The California State Auditor estimated that the state would need to spend $7.4 billion to meet all school facility needs from 2022 through 2027.

$700+

$7.4B

$700+

The Luskin Center for Innovation does not endorse any specific legislation. For additional citations and details, refer to our 2023 policy brief, “Protecting Californians with Heat-Resilient Schools.” To learn more, visit our heat equity webpage or contact associate director V. Kelly Turner at vktturner@ucla.edu.