

Dodd's classroom earthquake safety bill receives unanimous support from Assembly Education Committee

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SACRAMENTO – A bill by Assemblymember Bill Dodd (D-Napa) to protect students and teachers during earthquakes took an important step forward this week, receiving unanimous bipartisan support from the Assembly Education Committee.

Dodd's bill would require school districts in California to ensure that the contents of their classroom, like heavy bookshelves or hanging light fixtures, comply with state earthquake safety guidelines.

“Earthquakes are a part of life in California and we cannot wait for tragedy to strike to take common sense precautions to ensure our children and teachers are as safe as possible,” said Assemblymember Bill Dodd. “I'm thankful to have the unanimous support of the Assembly Education Committee and look forward to working with my colleagues in the legislature to advance classroom earthquake safety.”

The state of California has already invested time and resources into creating guidelines for securing the contents of classrooms in the event of an earthquake.

However, there is currently nothing in state law that requires school districts to adhere to the established guidelines produced by the Division of the State Architects.

Inspections of Napa schools following the South Napa Earthquake revealed significant damage inside classrooms, totaling millions of dollars.

These concerning results have been identified following other serious earthquakes throughout the state.

The shifting contents and blocked exits could have been life-threatening had the earthquake occurred during school hours.

“What we found after the Napa Earthquake was alarming ... we found classrooms that we couldn't even get inside because things had fallen in the doorway,” said Don Evans, member of the Napa Valley Unified School District, who testified before the education committee. “We believe the preventative approach is the way to go and we believe future damage is controllable.

Following the South Napa Earthquake, the Napa Valley Unified School District completed an inspection of its facilities and addressed the issues that were identified.

Dodd's legislation would require that all seismically active school districts in California proactively inspect school contents and equipment to ensure they are within state guidelines.

Assemblymember Bill Dodd represents the Fourth Assembly District, which includes all or portions of Napa, Yolo, Sonoma, Lake, Solano and Colusa counties.