



**SIERRA CLUB**  
TOIYABE CHAPTER

TO: Senate Committee on Finance  
FROM: Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club, Cassy Rivas  
RE: SB 458 -- Support  
DATE: April 15, 2019

Thank you Senate Committee on Finance for your leadership in introducing SB 458, which would provide funding for the creation and maintenance of school gardens. On behalf of the Sierra Club's Toiyabe Chapter and our members, we strongly support SB 458 as we believe a multitude of benefits and opportunities for students would stem from the passage of this bill.

The creation of gardens in Title 1 schools are an asset to the learning experiences of low-income students as many of them may not have opportunities to enjoy the outdoors as their peers do - despite the accessibility to public lands in this state. School gardens would allow students to get in touch with nature, while learning about the benefits that gardens have to offer, including learning where food comes from and gain a hands-on understanding of the natural sciences. In our world, where the use of technology has become prevalent, it's even more critical that we teach our children the importance of nature in our lives, especially students with limited opportunities.

The curriculum benefits of school gardens are numerous. As this bill states, these gardens would provide on-site opportunities for experiential and project-based learning to teach science and many other subjects. Access to a school garden would allow students to take part in fundamental lessons depending on grade level such as growing seeds, collecting basic ecological data, gaining an understanding of what it takes to grow food, and many other lessons. Furthermore, allowing organizations and members of the community to engage with the students in learning about the benefits of gardens will provide students an understanding of the career opportunities available in science, technology, farming, and many others.

I am also here to testify today because this bill deeply resonates with me. As someone who grew up in a low-income household in Texas where public lands and access to gardens in schools were nonexistent, having been able to play in my grandmother's beautiful garden provided me the chance to connect with nature and the outdoors. At the time I didn't know how the access to this garden would influence my life path, but now I can say with confidence that this experience influenced who I am today -- I am the epitome of someone who benefits from gardens. I am now someone with degrees in environmental science and biology with an emphasis in botany, with a career in conservation and land management, who loves spending time outdoors for work and for play, and now testifying on behalf of the Sierra Club for a bill to support school gardens.

Through the passage of this bill, we believe you can change many children's lives in a very positive yet simple way, so we encourage your support of SB 458.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Cassy Rivas  
Legislative Committee Chair, Toiyabe Chapter