

Date of Hearing: June 25, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

SB 237 (Hertzberg) – As Amended May 17, 2019

[Note: This bill is doubled referred to the Assembly Accountability and Administrative Review Committee and will be heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: California Laureate of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM): establishment of new position.

SUMMARY: Establishes in state government the position of the California Laureate for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the position of California STEM Laureate within state government, and provides that the STEM Laureate shall serve a term of two years, and may not serve more than two terms.
- 2) Provides that the STEM Laureate shall be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate from a list of three nominees provided by the California Council on Science and Technology (CCST), and requires each nominee to meet certain minimum qualifications, as specified.
- 3) Requires CCST to establish a selection panel of at least four experts, one from each STEM field, and provides that the panel shall solicit nominations from a broad array of STEM-related sources and individuals, as specified.
- 4) Authorizes CCST, in collaboration with the Office of the President of the University of California, to establish rules and regulations regarding the nomination process, as specified.
- 5) Authorizes CCST to establish an appropriate stipend for the STEM Laureate; and, upon appropriation of funds by the Legislature, requires CCST to provide for the payment of the STEM Laureate's expenses incurred in fulfilling their responsibilities, as specified.
- 6) Authorizes the STEM Laureate to fundraise for their own stipend, and authorizes CCST to make available other funds for activities that CCST and the STEM Laureate mutually agree to undertake, as specified.
- 7) Requires that the STEM Laureate, as a condition of the appointment, assume specified minimum responsibilities.
- 8) Authorizes CCST to receive gifts, donations, bequests, grants of funds, or any other revenues from public or private sources, and authorizes CCST to expend those moneys, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to increase the stipend of the STEM Laureate, as specified

- 9) Includes legislative findings and declarations relating to the importance of STEM research and education.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes, the California Arts Council (CAC) as a state agency; setting forth CAC's primary mission, to advance California through the arts and creativity by encouraging artistic awareness, participation, and expression (Government Code (GOV) Section 8751).
- 2) Establishes the position of California Poet Laureate, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate from a list of nominees garnered by the CAC (GOV Section 8760).

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 1) Unknown annual stipend, from the General Fund and private funds, likely in the low tens of thousands of dollars, per year for the STEM Laureate.
- 2) Ongoing costs for travel for the STEM Laureate to attend public events and additional expenses related to the laureate's specified duties. Each event, including travel, lease of facilities, and associated expenses would cost up to \$15,000. Assuming the STEM Laureate attends two events per year, these costs would be approximately \$30,000 per year.

COMMENTS: *Background.* The position of California Poet Laureate was established in 2001; prior to being established in statute, the Legislature had conferred the honorary title of Poet Laureate on five individuals.

Today, the California Poet Laureate is a Governor's appointee whose mission is to advocate for the art of poetry in classrooms and boardrooms across the state, to inspire an emerging generation of literary artists, and to educate all Californians about the many poets and authors who have influenced our great state through creative literary expression. Over the course of a two-year term, the Poet Laureate provides public readings in urban and rural locations across California, educates civic and state leaders about the value of poetry and creative expression, and undertakes a significant cultural project, with one of its goals being to bring poetry to students who might otherwise have little opportunity to be exposed.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The National Science Foundation united science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and created the STEM acronym in the 1990s – a strategic decision made by scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians to combine forces and create a stronger political voice. STEM education is an interdisciplinary and applied approach that is coupled with real-world, problem-based learning; and, integrates the four disciplines through cohesive and active teaching and learning approaches.

According to information provided by the author, in 2016, out of approximately, 67.4 million American graduates, only 568,000 graduates received a STEM related degree. Economic projections reveal a need for approximately 1 million more STEM professional than the United States will produce at the current rate over the next decade.

Purpose of this measure. According to the author, "Spreading awareness and understanding of STEM advancements is a critical element of preparing California citizens of all ages for a technology-intensive future and ensuring that the State of California remains a global leader in innovation and high-tech success".

The author contends that the state does not have an official spokesperson to explain and promote the importance of STEM to Californians.

This measure creates the California Laureate of STEM; who will be tasked to embody, demonstrate, and articulate the importance and excitement of STEM, traveling throughout the state to schools, colleges and universities, and events, in order to better inform, educate and create excitement to Californians about STEM.

Committee comments. Over the course of the last several years, the Legislature and many stakeholder groups have educated Californians on the importance of STEM and the need for individuals to pursue STEM degrees. The state has also shown the need for the continued importance of the arts; in recent years, in many cases, STEM has become “STEAM” – the “a” being for arts.

To be consistent with the recent movement from STEM to STEAM, moving forward, the author may wish to ensure that the arts are fully incorporated in the laureate position, thus creating a California Laureate of STEAM and not STEM.

Related legislation. AB 28 (Obernolte), which is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee, would establish a State Seal of STEM to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

SB 748 (Stern), which is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, would establish the position of California Youth Poet Laureate, and authorize the Governor to appoint an individual from among 3 nominees ranging from ages 13 to 19.

Prior legislation. AB 2329 (Bonilla), Chapter 693, Statutes of 2016, established a computer science strategic implementation advisory board to develop a K-12 computer science strategic implementation plan.

AB 113 (Pavley), Chapter 206, Statutes of 2001, established the position of California Poet Laureate, and required the Poet Laureate to perform specified duties.

AB 1385 (Chacon) of 1983, which failed passage in the Senate Governmental Organization Committee, would have created the honorary position of Poet Laureate of California to be conferred by the Arts Council, and would have effectively retired the state’s existing Poet Laureate (Charles “Gus” Garrigus) and allowed him to receive the title of Poet Laureate Emeritus.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Code.org

Opposition

None on file.

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