



# AGENDA REPORT

City Council

<b>DATE:</b>	April 21, 2026
<b>TO:</b>	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
<b>FROM:</b>	Councilmember Soheila Bana
<b>Subject:</b>	Support for Senate Bill 959 Regarding Local Fire Agency Authority and School Safety Measures During Wildfire Emergencies
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</b>	No direct fiscal impact on the City of Richmond's General Fund. Passing this resolution is an act of legislative advocacy. If <a href="#">SB 959</a> passes at the state level, it will have a positive financial protection impact on local public-school districts within our municipal boundaries.
<b>PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:</b>	None
<b>STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:</b>	<p>Currently, California public schools are funded based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA). If a school district closes a campus preemptively due to extreme weather or a wildfire threat, it risks losing state funding.</p> <p><a href="#">Senate Bill 959 (SB 959)</a> eliminates this financial barrier. It allows a local fire agency to make a formal determination that a major safety hazard is imminent, shielding the school district from financial penalties if they must close or if attendance drops. This agenda item proposes that the City of Richmond formally support SB 959.</p>

<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	ADOPT a resolution supporting California Senate Bill 959 to empower local fire agencies to determine major safety hazards and protect school funding during extreme wildfire emergencies - Councilmember Soheila Bana (510-672-3490).
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**DISCUSSION:**

The City of Richmond and surrounding West Contra Costa County neighborhoods contain significant Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) zones. During Red Flag Days (extreme heat, low humidity, and high winds), these hillsides are highly susceptible to fast-moving brush fires.

A critical safety obstacle during wildfire events is traffic congestion. As seen in past California fires, gridlocked roads prevent residents from escaping and first responders from entering. Traditional school drop-offs and pick-ups add massive amounts of vehicular traffic to the roadways. Recently, emergency officials—including those in the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD)—have highlighted that preemptively closing schools in high-risk fire zones on Red Flag Days is a vital tool to clear evacuation routes and save lives.

However, school administrators are currently caught in a dilemma: prioritize physical safety by closing school or prioritize the school’s budget by staying open to collect ADA funding. [SB 959](#) resolves this by placing safety decisions in the hands of fire professionals without penalizing school budgets.

Furthermore, standardizing modern hardening metrics is critical. The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Standards (IBHS) "Wildfire Prepared Home" standards provide science-backed pathways for structural survival, emphasizing that both neighborhood planning and institutional facilities must adapt to survive embers and radiant heat.

Adopting this resolution to formally support SB 959, aligns local emergency preparedness with state-level funding mechanics.

**DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:**

- Attachment 1 – Resolution
- Attachment 2 – SB 959