

AB 1634: “Have a Heart, Be a Star, Help Our Kids” License Plate Program

Assemblymember Laurie Davies

IN BRIEF

AB 1634 updates the pricing and funding structure of California’s Kids Plates specialty license plate program to reflect current DMV specialty plate costs, significantly increasing revenue for child health and safety programs. The bill expands funding sources by allowing Legacy specialty license plate holders to use Kids Plates symbols for personalization, reforms how funds are distributed to ensure all 58 counties benefit equitably, and guarantees stable funding for state and local child care licensing, injury prevention, and child abuse prevention efforts.

THE ISSUE

The Kids Plates program funds critical child safety, injury prevention, child abuse prevention, and child care initiatives across California. However, Kids Plates pricing has not been updated since 1992, leaving revenues far below those generated by other specialty license plates. As a result, funding has not kept pace with growing statewide needs, population changes, or inflation.

Additionally, existing distribution formulas do not ensure that all 58 counties receive an equitable share of funds, limiting community-level impact in some regions. State agencies responsible for child care licensing and injury prevention also face challenges maintaining stable operations without predictable, sufficient funding. Together, these issues reduce the effectiveness and reach of Kids Plates investments intended to protect California’s children.

CURRENT LAW

Under current law, Kids Plates specialty license plates are sold and renewed at outdated fee levels established in 1992 (Vehicle Code Section 5072). Proceeds are deposited into the Kids Plates Child Health and Safety Fund and allocated among childhood injury prevention, child abuse prevention, and child care-related programs under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 18285.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) Child Care Licensing Division, the Department of Public Health (DPH) Injury Prevention Branch, First 5 county commissions, county child abuse prevention trust funds, and certain statewide injury prevention initiatives receive portions of these funds. However, current statutes do not fully account for inflation, population growth, or the need for consistent statewide and county-level funding, nor do they allow Legacy specialty plate holders to contribute to Kids Plates programs through symbol personalization.

THE SOLUTION

AB 1634 modernizes the Kids Plates program by updating outdated DMV pricing to match current specialty license plate fees, significantly increasing revenue for child health and safety programs. The bill also expands funding by allowing Legacy specialty license plate holders to use Kids Plates symbols for personalization, with proceeds shared between child safety and environmental programs.

To ensure fairness and impact, AB 1634 reforms fund distribution so all 58 counties receive an equitable share through existing First 5 county commissions and county child abuse prevention trust funds without creating new administrative layers. The bill guarantees stable funding for the Department of Social Services Child Care Licensing Division and strengthens support for childcare provider recruitment, training, childhood injury prevention, and child abuse prevention at both the state and local levels.

By increasing revenue, improving equity, and protecting core state functions, AB 1634 delivers a sustainable, statewide solution to better protect California's children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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