



New Legislation Calls for Expanded Financial Aid Opportunities for Students in the California Community Colleges System

Bill would establish the California Community College Student Financial Aid Program to provide need-based grants to eligible students

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California community college students facing challenges affording their higher educational journey would have access to a new financial aid program under proposed legislation that addresses built-in inequities of existing state and federal aid policies.

Senate Bill 291, introduced today by state Sen. Connie M. Leyva, D-Chino, seeks to establish a California Community College Student Financial Aid Program that would base aid not only on the cost of tuition, but on the total cost of attendance – including the cost of housing, transportation and textbooks. Awards would help cover expenses not being addressed by a student’s family contributions, employment, and other aid, such as Pell Grants and the Cal Grant program. In addition, financial aid would be available whether a student is seeking a degree, certificate, or short-term career education program.

“The true cost of attending college is clearly more than just tuition,” Senator Leyva said. “It is critically important that our community colleges remain an affordable option for all students. When non-tuition costs like housing, food, and textbooks are considered, community college is often more expensive for our lowest-income students to attend than other state universities. SB 291 addresses this issue by creating a financial aid program that helps to cover a community college student’s whole cost of attendance.”

“In most regions of California, the true cost of attending community college for low-income students is higher than for students at a nearby California State University or University of California campus,” said California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley. “Very few community college students qualify for financial aid to cover living expenses, transportation, or textbooks. Sen. Leyva’s bill seeks to address these inequities.”

Just 5 percent of community college students received a Cal Grant last year, compared to nearly 40 percent of undergraduates at the University of California and approximately 36 percent of students at the California State University system. All told, California community colleges enroll about two-thirds of the state’s undergraduate students, yet they receive just 7 percent of Cal Grant funds.

While California’s community colleges offer among the least expensive tuition rates in the country at \$46 per unit, the actual cost of attending a community college for a student living independently is more than \$20,000 annually when housing, transportation, textbooks and personal items are taken into account. Today, a California community college student receiving the maximum amount of aid possible would still face a deficit of more than \$6,000. Very few community college students qualify

for financial aid to cover living expenses, transportation or textbooks, and low-income students with unmet financial need have limited choices: work more hours, take fewer courses, accumulate what can become crushing debt, or drop out of school.

“Far too often community college students are left out of the conversation of equity especially when it comes to financial aid,” said Alexander Walker-Griffin, the voting student representative on the Community Colleges Board of Governors. “With the cost of living rising in California and the need for a college degree becoming more of a requirement for financial stability it is imperative that we give every student the financial ability to achieve their goals.”

SB 291 is co-authored by state senators Ben Allen, D-Santa Monica; Steven Bradford, D-Gardena; Hannah-Beth Jackson, D-Santa Barbara; Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco; as well as assembly members Richard Bloom, D-Santa Monica, David Chiu, D-San Francisco, Eloise Gómez Reyes, D-San Bernardino and Buffy Wicks, D-Oakland. For more information and to lend your voice in support of the bill, visit www.truecollegecost.com.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, composed of 73 districts and 115 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. California community colleges provide career education and workforce training; guaranteed transfer to four-year universities; degree and certificate pathways; and basic skills education in English and math. As the state’s engine for social and economic mobility, the California Community Colleges supports the [Vision for Success](#) a strategic plan designed to improve student success outcomes, increase transfer rates and eliminate achievement gaps. For more information, please visit the [California Community Colleges website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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