September 10, 2014

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE:  AB 13 (Conway) Student Veterans: Nonresident Tuition Exemption
REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, I respectfully urge you to sign Assembly Bill 13 (Conway). This bill requires California community colleges to update polices to ensure compliance with the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014. Although primarily addressing veterans’ healthcare, the new federal law prevents the Veterans Administration from paying for instruction using the GI Bill’s education benefits if the eligible student is charged tuition and fees at a rate higher than in-state residents.

The effect of the new federal law is that veterans who are using their GI Bill will pay in-state tuition regardless of their state of residency. California community colleges educate approximately 44,000 veterans and we estimate about 600 are from out-of-state. Although, this is a small number when compared to our approximately 2.1 million student population, the effect on the individual veteran is great, and the message California sends to all veterans is a powerful statement of support.

The Board of Governors has a long history of supporting legislation that would provide in-state tuition for all veterans. However, during the recession the estimated revenue loss of out-of-state tuition and fees prevented legislative approval. The Chancellor’s Office has argued that any revenue loss would in part be offset by the monthly subsistence and housing allowances provided by the GI Bill, which the veteran would spend in California. These benefits add to the return on investment produced by the student as a result of achieving his or her higher education goals.

I thank you for your consideration and urge your signature on AB 13 (Conway). If you or your staff has any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 445-4434.

Sincerely,

Brice W. Harris
Chancellor

cc: Assembly Member Connie Conway