
THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1232
Author: Glazer (D)
Amended: 6/18/20
Vote: 21

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/19/20
AYES: Hurtado, Jones, Beall, Jackson, Pan, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Melendez

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/18/20
AYES: Portantino, Bates, Bradford, Hill, Jones, Leyva, Wieckowski

SUBJECT: CalWORKs: postsecondary education

SOURCE: Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
University of California Student Association

DIGEST: This bill requires California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) recipients who are participating in specified educational activities to receive a standard allowance of \$250 to \$500 for the purpose of paying for costs associated with attending a postsecondary educational institution, as specified. This bill exempts CalWORKs recipients who are enrolled in specified educational activities from participating in specified CalWORKs activities.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which permits states to implement the program under a state plan. (*42 USC § 601 et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes in state law the CalWORKs program to provide cash assistance and other social services for low-income families through TANF. Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance through a combination of state,

- county and federal TANF funds. (*WIC 11120 et seq.*)
- 3) Requires, generally, a recipient of CalWORKs benefits to participate in welfare-to work (WTW) activities as a condition of eligibility for aid. (*WIC 11320 et. seq.*)
 - 4) Mandates the sequence of employment-related activities a CalWORKs participant must engage in subsequent to the receipt of aid, unless otherwise exempted. Further requires that recipients shall, and applicants may, at the option of the county and with consent of the applicant, receive orientation to the WTW program. (*WIC 11320.1*)
 - 5) Requires a CalWORKs applicant or recipient to participate in WTW activities for 24 cumulative months, as specified, unless they are otherwise exempt. (*WIC 11322.85*)
 - 6) Permits a CalWORKs recipient subject to the 24-month time limitation to request an extension, as specified, and to present evidence to the county that he or she meets certain specified circumstances. (*WIC 11322.87*)
 - 7) Requires necessary supportive services to be available to every WTW participant in order to participate in an assigned program activity or to accept employment, to include childcare, diaper costs, transportation costs, ancillary expenses, which include the cost of books, tools, clothing specifically required for the job, fees, and other necessary costs and personal counseling, as specified. (*WIC 11323.2*)
 - 8) Requires that payments for supportive services shall be advanced to the participant, wherever necessary, and when desired by the participant, so that the participant need not use his or her funds to pay for these services. Further requires that payments for child care services shall be made, as specified. (*WIC 11323.4(a)*)
 - 9) Requires that all participants, except for certain teenage parents, shall be assigned to participate for a period of up to four consecutive weeks in job search activities, which may include job club, to identify the participant's qualifications, as specified. (*WIC 11325.22*)
 - 10) Requires a participant to work with the county welfare department to develop and agree on a WTW plan on the basis of an assessment of the individual's skills and needs, as specified. (*WIC 11325.4*)

This bill:

- 1) Requires that a CalWORKS recipient shall be entitled to receive the standard allowance for ancillary services for books and college supplies, as specified, and shall not be required to enter into a WTW plan (except for the purpose of receiving any of the supportive services requested by the recipient); complete job club; or complete an assessment, as long as the following criteria is satisfied:
 - a) Attending a publicly funded postsecondary educational institution full time and making satisfactory progress at that institution; or
 - b) Attending a publicly funded postsecondary educational institution part time and meeting hourly WTW participation rates, based on the number of academic units and the hours of study time required for those academic units.
- 2) Requires that, for purposes of calculating whether a recipient is meeting the hourly participation requirement, the number of hours for study time shall be three hours of study time for each academic unit.
- 3) Requires that, if a recipient's academic units and study time do not meet the total number of hours required, the county shall assist the recipient in meeting the required hours by allowing the recipient to submit a proposal for meeting those hours based on the full array of options available to the recipient, which the county shall apply to satisfy the hourly participation requirement.
- 4) Prohibits a recipient of the standard allowance for necessary supportive services from being subject to WTW requirements.
- 5) Requires that a recipient who is attending a publicly funded postsecondary educational institution shall provide verification that they are making satisfactory progress at the beginning of each term when that information is available from the institution the recipient attends.
- 6) Provides that "full time," "part time," and "making satisfactory progress" shall be determined according to the rules and regulations of the publicly funded postsecondary educational institution that the individual attends.
- 7) Requires that an individual who meets the criteria for an advance or reimbursement for necessary supportive services shall be required to sign a WTW plan each academic semester or quarter.

- 8) Requires the county to make a copy of the WTW plan available to the individual 30 days prior to the registration for each semester or quarter. Further requires the WTW plan to be returned to the county after the individual registers for classes for the semester or quarter.
- 9) Requires the WTW plan to include specified information.
- 10) Requires the WTW plan to be mailed to the recipient for completion and be returned by mail or by electronic means, if the county has the capacity to make the agreement electronically available. Requires that, if the county requires the agreement to be returned by mail, the county shall include a postage-prepaid envelope for that purpose. Permits the recipient to request, in writing, to meet with a county employer to receive assistance with completing the WTW plan.
- 11) Requires a CalWORKs eligible individual who provides the county evidence that the individual is participating in an educational activity full time at a publicly funded postsecondary educational institution shall receive an allowance of \$500 for each semester or \$250 for each quarter, and a CalWORKs eligible individual who provides the county evidence that the individual is participating in an educational activity part time at a postsecondary educational institution shall receive an allowance of \$250 for the purpose of paying costs associated with attending the postsecondary educational institution 10 days before the beginning of the academic semester or quarter, as specified.
- 12) Requires that the amount of the allowance shall be considered a standard allowance for ancillary services for books and college supplies.
- 13) Permits a recipient to request reimbursement for the actual costs for ancillary services, as specified, if the recipient provides verification of expenses that exceed allowance for books and college supplies that are required for the classes in which the individual is enrolled.
- 14) Requires the county to issue payment for actual costs for ancillary services within 20 days of the recipient's request.
- 15) Permits a county to elect to satisfy the requirements of the allowance in the form of a book voucher or other means of payment to a store or stores that carry the books required for the recipient. The county may only exercise this option if the county makes all required books available to the recipient at least 10 days before the start of the semester or quarter to ensure that the participant has the required books on the first day of class.

- 16) Requires the amounts of the allowance shall be adjusted upward annually by the increase, if any, in the United States Transportation Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- 17) Provides that the bill shall become operative only if funds are appropriate in the annual Budget Act or another statute for its purpose.
- 18) Makes technical amendments.

Comments

According to the author, “student parents on CalWORKs face an uphill battle in attaining a college education. After their first year of being a college student on CalWORKs, they must complete an additional 20-30 hours of core activities. This can lead to these students dropping out of college to meet these hours or receiving reduced benefits so they can continue going to school. This effectively punishes low-income parents for seeking a college education. SB 1232 ensures our student-parents have an opportunity to complete their education before timing out of CalWORKs.” The author further states, “CalWORKs students receive funds for books, but often get those funds too late, so they fall behind in their studies because they cannot buy their books in time. Our bill would require county welfare agencies to disperse these books funds prior to the academic term beginning.”

Education, Employment, and Earnings. The long-term earning potential for a person with a college degree is the highest it has been in decades. The Public Policy Institute of California reports that the typical full-time worker with a bachelor’s degree earned \$81,000 in 2017, while the typical worker with a high school diploma earned \$36,000. Educational attainment is also associated with lower unemployment and less strain on the social safety net, as well as higher tax revenue and greater civic participation.

CalWORKs. As the state’s largest anti-poverty program, CalWORKs provides temporary cash assistance aimed at moving children out of poverty and helping qualified low income families meet their basic needs, such as rent, clothing, utility bills, food and other items needed to ensure children are cared for at home and safely remain with their families. In addition to cash assistance, adult CalWORKs recipients are provided education, employment and training services designed to help remove barriers to work and promote self-sufficiency. These services are typically outlined in a WTW plan.

In order to be eligible for CalWORKs, families must meet income and asset tests that are based on family size and county of residence. For example, a family of three living in a higher cost-of-living region could qualify to receive CalWORKs benefits if their monthly adjusted income is no more than \$1,453. The same family living in a lower cost-of-living region would qualify if their monthly adjusted income is no more than \$1,379.

As of October 2019, the maximum monthly grant amount for a family of three, if the family has no other income and lives in a high-cost county, is \$878. The same family living in a lower cost-of-living county would be eligible for up to \$834 per month. According to the CalWORKs Annual Summary dated March 2020, the average CalWORKs grant for families participating in WTW during Fiscal Year 2019-20 was \$689 per month. CalWORKs provides cash assistance to more than 383,000 families and 450,000 children.

Sequence of Employment-Related Services. After a person has been determined to be eligible for the CalWORKs program, the sequence of employment-related services starts with orientation and appraisal. After orientation and appraisal, recipients may be required to participate in job search and job club; family stabilization; substance abuse, mental health, or domestic violence services, whichever is appropriate. However, the county may determine that the recipient should skip these activities and go straight to assessment. Upon referral to assessment, participants work with the county welfare department to develop and agree on WTW plans that are based on participants' skills and needs.

Welfare-to-Work. A key component of the federal welfare reform of the mid-1990s was the encouragement of job training and employment. Current CalWORKs rules reflect this focus on training and employment by limiting the length of time adults may receive benefits and requiring recipients to perform certain activities as a condition of receiving benefits.

Under the CalWORKs program rules, adults may not receive CalWORKs cash benefits for more than 48-months throughout the entirety of their lifetime. During those 48 months, adults may receive a total of 24 months of WTW services and activities, if they meet program requirements. Adult benefits in the CalWORKs program are contingent upon participation in WTW activities, which are designed to promote job readiness and self-sufficiency. WTW activities include subsidized and unsubsidized employment, community service, adult basic education, community college, job skills, training, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and other activities necessary to assist recipients in obtaining

employment. Unless they are exempt, adult parents are required to participate in WTW activities 20 – 30 hours per week, depending on their circumstances.

CalWORKs Funds for Ancillary Expenses. CalWORKs rules permit a recipient to obtain an advance for supportive services, which includes ancillary expenses. Ancillary expenses include the costs to purchase books, tools and other expenses related to WTW activities. Expenses for transportation can include but are not limited to gas for a vehicle, a bus pass, taxi fare, parking costs, etc., necessary to complete WTW activities. Under current law, such payments “shall be advanced to the participant, wherever necessary, and when desired by the participant, so that the participant need not use his or her funds to pay for these services.” Typically, in order to receive reimbursement for supportive services, including ancillary expenses, a recipient must have a signed WTW plan. However, supportive services can be provided to a client at any point after they have come onto aid to mitigate barriers to participation.

Related/Prior Legislation

SB 374 (Glazer, 2019) would have required that a CalWORKs eligible individual participating in an educational activity full time and making satisfactory progress, as specified, receive a standard allowance of \$500; be deemed to be meeting all WTW requirements, including the hourly participation requirements; be entitled to advance payments for allowance or reimbursement and other necessary supportive services, as specified; and is entitled to an extension of the 24-month cumulative participation period, as specified. The bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 227 (Mayes, 2017) would have created the CalWORKs Educational Opportunity and Attainment Program to offer education grants and stipends to eligible CalWORKs participants who complete certain educational programs. The bill did not pass out of the Senate Human Services Committee.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Cost pressures, as this bill’s amendments make it subject to a budget appropriation, of one-time \$1.3 million for SAWS automation changes (Office of Systems Integration), which may be spread over out years, depending on the implementation timing.

- Cost pressures for limited-term, potentially tens of thousands for CDSS staff resources to promulgate regulations.
- County welfare departments currently provide reimbursement to students for educational expenses, and this bill would change the point in time at which funds are disbursed to the participant. In addition, CalWORKs employment services are based on actual expenditures, so reimbursements to clients are captured in methodology.

SUPPORT:(Verified 6/18/20)

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations (co-source)

University of California Student Association (co-source)

Associated Students, University of California, Davis

California Food Policy Advocates

County Welfare Directors Association of California

Glide

National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter

SEIU California

Student Senate for California Community Colleges

Western Center on Law & Poverty, Inc.

OPPOSITION: (Verified 6/18/20)

None received

Prepared by: Taryn Smith / HUMAN S. /

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