
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Hurtado, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1326		
Author:	Arambula		
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Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Taryn Smith		

Subject: Public social services: county liaison for higher education.

SUMMARY

This bill requires a county human services agency to designate at least one employee as a staff liaison to serve as a contact for academic counselors and other professional staff at a campus of an institution of public higher education within the county to provide information on available public social services, as specified. This bill also requires the Office of the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU) and the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community College (CCC), and requests the Office of the President of the University of California (UC), in collaboration with county human services agencies, to conduct a survey to determine the effectiveness of the county liaison position established by this bill.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes under federal law the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to promote the general welfare and to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the nation's population by raising the levels of nutrition among low-income households. (*7 USC Section 2011 et seq.*)
- 2) Restricts any individual, who is enrolled at least half-time in an institutions of higher education, from qualifying for SNAP benefits, unless the individual qualifies for an exception, as specified (*7 CFR 273.5 et seq.*)
- 3) Establishes in California statute the CalFresh program to administer the provision of federal SNAP benefits to families and individuals meeting specified criteria. (*WIC 18900 et seq.*)
- 4) Requires CDSS, in consultation with representatives of the Chancellor's Office of the CCCs, the Chancellor's Office for the CSU, and UC President's Offices, the California Workforce Investment Board, county human services agencies, and advocates for students and clients, to establish a protocol to identify and verify all potential exemptions to the eligibility rule specified in current federal law, and to identify and verify

participation in educational programs, as specified, that would exempt a student from the eligibility rule. (*WIC 18901.11(b)*)

- 5) Requires CDSS to maintain and regularly update the list of programs identified by the workgroup as meeting specified federal standards, which provide that a student is eligible for an exemption from the CalFresh program's eligibility rules if the student's attendance can be described as part of a program to increase the student's employability. (*WIC 18901.11(c)*)
- 6) Instructs CDSS to issue and maintain instructions for county human services agencies to verify exemptions to the CalFresh student eligibility rules for students who participate in qualified programs, who are approved and anticipate participating in state or federal workstudy, or students who meet one of the qualifications for exemptions, as specified. (*WIC 18901.11(d)(1)*)
- 7) Establishes under federal law the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to provide aid and welfare-to-work services to eligible families. (*42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.*)
- 8) Establishes the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program within California to provide TANF funds for welfare-to-work (WTW) services to eligible families. (*WIC 11200 et seq.*)
- 9) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the UC Board of Regents (Regents) and grants the Regents full powers of organization and governance subject only to legislative control as necessary to ensure the security of funds, compliance with terms of its endowments, and the statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property, and the purchase of materials, goods, and services. (*Article IX, Section (9)(a) of the California Constitution*)
- 10) Stipulates no provision of the Donahue Higher Education Act shall apply to a UC unless the UC Regents adopts the provision. (*EDC 67400*)
- 11) Establishes the CSU system, made of 23 campuses, and bestows upon the CSU Trustees, through the Board of Trustees, the powers, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, and control of the CSU system. (*EDC 66606 and 89030, et seq*)
- 12) Establishes the CCC under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this state. The CCC shall be comprised of community college districts. (*EDC 70900*)
- 13) Requires each campus of the CSU and the CCC, and requests each campus of the UC to include on a website account for enrolled students, a notification of and a link to information on specified public services and programs, including the CalFresh program, county or local housing resources, as specified, and local or county mental health services. (*EDC 66027.6*)

- 14) Establishes the Community College Student Financial Aid Outreach Program to provide financial aid training to counselors, which includes addressing the financial needs of a number of in-need populations of students, as specified. (*EDC 69514.5*)
- 15) Establishes the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program within the CCC and specifies the intention of the program is to assist CalWORKs recipients prepare for employment. (*EDC 79200 et seq.*)

This Bill:

- 1) Makes Legislative findings regarding student housing and food insecurity and declares legislative intent to expedite the connection between students in need and critical county services.
- 2) Requires the Office of the Chancellor of the CSU and the Office of the Chancellor of the CCC, and requests the Office of the President of the UC, in collaboration with county human services agencies, to conduct a survey to determine the effectiveness of the county liaison position established by this bill.
- 3) Requires the survey to address, at a minimum, all of the following:
 - a) The barriers and opportunities faced by county staff liaisons in responding to the requests of counselors or other relevant professional staff;
 - b) The barriers and opportunities or hurdles faced by counselors or other relevant professional staff in engaging with county staff liaisons;
 - c) The barriers and opportunities for increased collaboration between student assistance programs enabling cross referrals between different programs including, but not limited to, CalFresh, food pantries, and homeless student assistance.
 - d) Any changes in counselors' or other relevant professional staffs' knowledge or awareness of county programs as a result of the county liaison position; and
 - e) The experiences of students connected to county services through counselors or other relevant professional staff.
 - f) An estimated number of college students at each institution of public higher education likely eligible for but not receiving public assistance program benefits, including CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal.
 - g) An estimated number of college students at each institution of public higher education that enrolled in public assistance programs, including, but not limited to, CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal, as a result of the engagement with the county liaison position.

- 4) Requires the Office of the Chancellor of the CSU and the Office of the Chancellor of the CCC, and requests the Office of the President of the UC, to report the results of the survey to the Senate Committees on Education and Human Services, the Assembly Committees on Higher Education and Human Services, the Assembly Committee on Budget, the Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on or before January 1, 2025, as specified.
- 5) Repeals the survey and report requirements on January 1, 2026.
- 6) Requires a county human services agency to designate at least one employee as a staff liaison, as provided.
- 7) Requires the staff liaison to serve as a point of contact for academic counselors and other relevant professional staff at a campus of an institution of public higher education located within the county and provide information on programs and services offered by the agency that may be available to students attending a campus of an institution of public higher education within the county, as specified.
- 8) Requires a county human services agency, with input from the public institutions of higher education located within the county, to develop protocols for engagement between the agency and a campus of an institution of public higher education located within the county. Encourages the agency and the public institutions of higher education located within the county to consult stakeholders while developing the protocol, including, but not limited to, all of the following:
 - a) A representative from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county and further requires the representative shall be a staff member tasked with addressing students' basic needs on the campus;
 - b) A counselor or other relevant professional staff from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county; and
 - c) Relevant organizations representing the interests of students, faculty, and staff from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county.
- 9) Encourages counties to provide information to the campuses of an institution of public higher education located within their borders regarding the location and hours of county human services agency public offices, as well as information regarding online and telephone access to program applications.
- 10) Encourages each campus of an institution of public higher education is to disseminate information regarding applying for human services programs and benefits to the campus administrator associated with student services or their designee.
- 11) Requires any disclosure or sharing of personal information to be made in compliance with applicable state and federal confidentiality laws.
- 12) Defines "public higher education" to have the same meaning as in current law.

- 13) Permits CDSS to implement provisions of the bill by all-county letters or similar instructions.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to an analysis prepared by the Assembly Appropriations Committee, the April 27, 2021 version of this bill will likely have the following fiscal impact:

- Ongoing General Fund (GF) costs of approximately \$2 million annually for county agencies to designate a liaison to work with college staff to provide resources to college students. This estimate assumes each of the state's 58 counties would designate 0.5 of an employee's time to serve as a liaison. These costs are potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.
- Minor one-time GF costs to UC President's Office and the CSU Chancellor's Office to collect survey data and report information by January 1, 2025. According to the CSU, staffing costs to collect and report the program will be in the tens of thousands of dollars over three years, and county agencies will be collecting some of the information for the survey, which will offset some costs. The state has nine UCs and 23 CSUs.
- One-time GF costs in the mid-hundreds of thousands of dollars over three years to the CCC chancellor's office to collect survey data and report information by January 1, 2025. The state has 116 community colleges.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Bill:

According to the author, "recent polls show that over half of community college students are affected by food or housing insecurity. County health and human service programs not only address basic physical and mental health needs but can be critical to a student's academic performance and success. Unfortunately, navigating the eligibility and enrollment process for these programs can be difficult for both community college counselors and students alike. Counselors and other college staff could more quickly connect students with county resources if they had assistance from the county. AB 1326 would require county human services agencies to designate a staff liaison to serve as a just such a link between counselors and county services. With liaisons directing counselors or other college staff to the appropriate programs, in-need students can more rapidly find the support they need."

Students' Basic Needs

Food insecurity is defined by the U.S Department of Agriculture as the condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. Housing insecurity among college students is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as an individual who is lacking regular, fixed, or adequate nighttime residence. In recent years, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, research on the prevalence of basic needs insecurities among college students has shown that an alarming number of students are food and/or housing insecure.

In December 2018, the United States Government Accountability Office published a report that examined food insecurity among college students and how the federal government could assist in alleviating student hunger. Per the report, food insecurity studies across all 50 states showed that, on average, more than 30 percent of college students experience food insecurity. Research from California shows a higher prevalence of food insecurity among college students who attend public higher education institutions.

In 2019, the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) published the results of the Student Expenses and Resources Survey (SEARS), which found 35 percent of California college students surveyed experienced food insecurity. Per the same survey, 10 percent of California college students surveyed did not have enough financial income to pay rent and 1 percent identified as having an inconsistent living situation. The survey identified racial disparities among those who identified as homeless, with 38 percent of college students identifying as both Hispanic or Latino and homeless and 23 percent identifying as Black or African American and homeless. Data from the three public higher education segments, corroborate the data from the CSAC survey.

- In 2019, the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice Survey collaborated with the CCC to publish a survey of CCC students' basic needs. Of those surveyed, 50 percent of CCC students experienced food insecurity within the past 30 days and 60 percent experienced housing insecurity in the previous year, with 19 percent of respondents reported experienced homelessness in the previous year. The percentage of food insecurity rises to 60 percent when students identify as African American, American Indian, or Alaskan Native.
- In 2018, the CSU conducted a survey of its student population and found that 41.5 percent of CSU students identified as food insecure and 10.9 percent of CSU students identified as having experienced homelessness one or more times in the previous year. CSU students who identify as Black and first in their families to attend college, experience food insecurity at a higher rate than their peers, as the survey found more than 65 percent identified as food insecure and 18 percent identified as homeless.
- In 2016 the University of California Office of the President commissioned a survey to determine the prevalence of food insecurity among UC college students. The study determined 44 percent of undergraduate students and 26 percent of graduate students experienced food insecurity. The report found that campus emergency food pantry utilization was higher among students who reported low and very low food security when compared to their food secure peers. Despite this, only 10.1 percent of students who reported very low food security and 7.5 percent of students who reported low food security received CalFresh benefits. The study also found 5 percent of UC undergraduate and graduate students identifying as homeless.

In each of these surveys and studies conducted by the public higher education institutions, students who identify as homeless and/or food insecure self-report how the daily struggle of meeting their basic needs affects them academically as they worry about or have to make difficult decisions regarding how to spend their finances which ultimately impacts their academic progression. Students who were homeless or food insecure self-reported stress, depression, and problems with emotions. These students also reported higher levels of personal concerns with

anxiety, fear, irritability, and depression and reported having more physical health issues, physical illness, and injury than their housing secure peers.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On March 4, 2020, Governor Newsom declared a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 19, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order #N-33-20 which was intended to reduce exposure to the virus by establishing a statewide stay at home order for non-essential workers and by implementing social distancing when conducting essential business. Similar stay at home orders were put into place all over the country. While the stay at home order has been lifted, less restrictive containment measures that limit exposure to the virus remained in place for over a year.

The economic repercussions of the stay at home orders and other containment measures were immediate and widespread as applications for public assistance and unemployment benefits spiked. Across the state, throughout the nation, and around the world, the effects of COVID-19 on public health and the economy have been dramatic. More than 600,000 lives have been lost to COVID-19 in the United States. Many individuals have become unemployed or underemployed, which caused them to experience food and housing insecurity.

During the statewide lockdown, campuses closed down and transitioned from in-person to an online learning model. To capture the impact COVID-19 was having on students CSAC collaborated with the UC Davis School of Education's California Education Lab and conducted a student survey of both current and incoming students. The survey found that more than half of the students were worried about meeting their basic needs such as housing, food, and rising technology costs. The Regents of the UC Special Committee on Basic Needs in November 2020 published, The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs, which reported 39 percent of undergraduate students in 2020 identified as food insecure and 64 percent of UC undergraduates were concerned the pandemic would impact their ability to meet their basic needs.

Connecting Low-Income Students to Social Services

Complicated program rules appear to create barriers to student access to some of the state's largest anti-poverty programs, such as CalWORKs, CalFresh and Medi-Cal. In recent years, the Legislature has taken proactive steps to address the prevalence of student hunger and housing insecurity. This includes almost \$30 million for outreach to connect students to the CalFresh program, connecting students who are Cal Grant recipients to CalFresh, among others. This bill could help connect low-income students to social services programs, like CalWORKs and CalFresh, which are administered by the counties with guidance provided by CDSS.

CalWORKs is the state's primary cash assistance program for low-income families. In addition to cash assistance, families are provided an array of services that are intended to remove barriers to self-sufficiency. Such services could include mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, or domestic violence services; job skills training; attendance in a secondary school or in a course leading to certificate of general educational development; among many others. The specific WTW services designed for each recipient are outlined in the CalWORKs recipient's WTW plan. In order to receive cash aid under CalWORKs, the recipient must meet the

requirements in their own WTW plan. According to the Public Policy Institute of California October 2020 report on Supporting Student Parents in Community College CalWORKs Program, students participating in CalWORKs are more likely to have a better course success rate, experience full-time enrollment, and matriculate to a degree than when not enrolled in college CalWORKs programs.

CalFresh, California's version of federal SNAP, provides monthly food benefits to qualified low-income individuals and families to assist with the purchase of the food they need to maintain adequate nutrition levels. The maximum grant amount for a household size of one is \$204 as of October 1, 2020. In December 2020, the average household grant was \$222 per month.

Historically, California's CalFresh participation rate has been at or near the lowest in the nation, with only about 70 percent of eligible recipients enrolled in CalFresh. This means about 30 percent eligible Californians are not receiving CalFresh. In June 2020, CDSS published *SB 77 CalFresh Student Data Report*, on college student participation in CalFresh and methods for improving student participation. According to the report, in the 2018-2019 academic year, 127,360 students received CalFresh benefits. However, between 289,211 and 561,873 students were likely to be eligible but not receiving food benefits in the same academic year. The report estimated that the student participation rate in CalFresh is between 18 and 30 percent.

While numerous factors contribute to the low take up rate for CalFresh, two commonly cited reasons for low enrollment are the complicated enrollment and recertification processes, especially for students and people who are elderly or disabled. Anecdotally, college students and administrators at public higher education institutions have expressed frustration with how challenging it can be for college students who face food insecurity to access CalFresh due to the complexity of eligibility rules for students.

Helping students to meet their basic needs by increasing their participation in social service programs is a cornerstone of the Governor's Council for Post-Secondary Education's Recovery with Equity: a Roadmap for Higher Education After the Pandemic. Specifically, the report calls for a simplified and integrated system that enables qualified college students access to the state's social services including CalFresh, housing programs, healthcare including mental health, direct aid, subsidized childcare, and transportation.

AB 1326 creates a system through which county health and human services agencies can communicate and collaborate with the higher education institutions within the county in order to connect needy students to social services benefits.

Related/Prior Legislation:

AB 543 (Davies, 2021) requires the CCC, CSU and requests the UC to provide students with educational information on CalFresh and the CalFresh student eligibility requirements during campus orientation. AB 543 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 396 (Gabriel, 2021) requires CDSS to issue a guidance letter regarding eligibility requirements for campus-based programs at the CCCs, the CSUs and the UCs to become state-approved employment and training programs and requires campus-based programs at the CCC and CSU, and requests campus-based programs at the UC to apply to become state-approved

employment and training programs by September 1, 2022. AB 396 is pending in the Senate Education Committee.

AB 85 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 4, Statutes of 2021) appropriated \$28.8 8 million for county administrators and outreach costs associated with CalFresh benefits to students enrolled in higher education institutions

SB 174 (Dodd, Chapter 173, Statutes of 2019) requires CDSS by January 1, 2021 to create a standardized form to be used by higher education institutions for the purposes of verifying a student's participation in either a federal or state work-study program for the purpose of determining CalFresh eligibility.

AB 1278 (Gabriel, Chapter 517, Statutes of 2019) requires each CCC and CSU campus and requests each UC campus to provide on an internet website-based account for an enrolled student notification of and a link to internet sites of CalFresh and local mental health and housing resources, as specified.

AB 2933 (Medina, 2018) would have required county health and human service agencies to designate an agency liaison for higher education and encouraged agencies to consult with community colleges, as specified. AB 2933 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.

SB 85 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 23, Statutes of 2017) requires the Trustees of the CSU, authorizes the governing board of participating a CCC district, and encourages the Regents of the UC to designate, a "hunger free campus" if they meet specified criteria, as defined, for the purpose of procuring additional legislative funds.

AB 214 (Weber, Chapter 134, Statutes of 2017) required the California Student Aid Commission to notify Cal Grant recipients who qualify for participation in the CalFresh program. Provided clarity to existing policies in order to simplify CalFresh administration for college students and required CDSS to maintain a list of programs that provide a student potential eligibility for a CalFresh exemption if specific requirements are met.

COMMENTS

This bill has been doubled referred and, should it move out of this committee, it will be referred to the Senate Committee on Education.

PRIOR VOTES

Assembly Floor:	79 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	16 - 0
Assembly Human Services Committee:	8 - 0

POSITIONS

Support:

Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (Sponsor)
California State University, Office of The Chancellor
California Student Aid Commission
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter

Oppose:

None received.

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