

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Cottie Petrie-Norris, Chair

AB 46 (Luz Rivas) – As Amended March 30, 2021

SUBJECT: California Youth Empowerment Act

SUMMARY: This bill establishes an advisory California Youth Empowerment Commission with the goal of providing meaningful opportunities for civic engagement to improve the quality of life for California's disconnected and disadvantaged youth. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines the chapter as the California Youth Empowerment Act and provides legislative findings and declarations.
- 2) Establishes the California Youth Empowerment Commission (Commission) made up of 25 voting commissioners who, after an initial staggered appointment terms designated by the Governor for their appointees, serve two year terms. The bill defines additional terms for eligibility to be a commissioner and defines commissioner responsibilities.
- 3) Directs the Governor to appoint 21 Commissioners meeting the following requirements:
 - a. With the exception of the at-large commissioner, two of the commissioners shall reside, work, or attend school in each of the following regions: Superior California, North Coast, San Francisco Bay Area, Northern San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast, Southern San Joaquin, Inland Empire, Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego/Imperial regions.
 - b. Ten of the commissioners shall be between 14 to 18 years of age.
 - c. Ten of the commissioners shall be between 18 to 25 years of age.
 - d. At least 10 commissioners shall have experienced a physical disability, youth homelessness, foster care, or juvenile incarceration.
 - e. One at-large commissioner, who may be between 14 to 25 years of age.
- 4) Directs the Senate Committee on Rules to appoint two at-large public members to the Commission.
- 5) Directs the Speaker of the Assembly to appoint two at-large public members to the Commission.
- 6) Appoints the following nonvoting members of the commission to include one Member of the Senate appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, one Member of the Assembly appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Secretary of California Health and Human Services
- 7) Outlines that the commission to be advisory in nature, for the main purpose of providing meaningful opportunities for civic engagement to improve the quality of life for California's disconnected and disadvantaged youth.
- 8) Requires the commission to conduct regular meetings, in accordance with specified timeframes and procedures, and, among other duties, formally advise and make

recommendations to the Legislature, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Governor, on various legislative and fiscal issues affecting youth. The bill allows commissioners to attend meeting through a teleconferencing platform if they are unable to travel to the meeting, provided other provisions of existing law are met.

- 9) Authorizes the commission to draft and approve resolutions, draft model legislation, provide testimony during legislative committee meetings, conduct public hearings, and award prizes or direct grants to organizations.
- 10) Requires the Governor to appoint an executive director of the California Youth Empowerment Commission to assist the commission in carrying out its work
- 11) Authorizes the commission to accept gifts and grants, and creates the Youth Commission Fund in the State Treasury, with moneys deposited in the fund available for expenditure, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to carry out the duties of the commission.

EXISTING LAW:

Existing law establishes various social services and programs to address the needs of young people in this state including the California Youth Leadership Project to support and promote civic engagement through scholarships to disconnected and disadvantaged youth.

Existing law, the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, authorizes state bodies, as defined, to conduct meetings via teleconference provided certain criteria are met, including that agendas must be posted at all teleconference locations and each teleconference location must be identified in the notice and agenda, each teleconference location must be accessible to the public, and members of the public must be able to address the state body directly.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

This bill establishes the California Youth Empowerment Commission (Commission) which would formally advise and make recommendations to the Legislature, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Governor on issues and matters that impact the quality of life for California's disconnected and disadvantaged youth. The Commission would conduct full commission meetings at least every other month, starting in August 2021, and it would publish an annual report to the Legislature, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Secretary of California Health and Human Services, and Governor detailing the activities, issues, demographics, budget, and outcomes of the commission.

Additionally, the Commission would lead community engagement work through the commission's public hearings, outreach efforts, public awareness campaigns, and grant programs. While there is no current California statewide youth commission, California has experience with this model like the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls or the California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs, both which have been charged with engaging the public to define challenges faced by California's most vulnerable populations and policy solutions to addresses these challenges to the California State Legislature,

the Governor, and the greater public. Models for youth commissions can be found in other states as well as on the local level.

According to the Author: “Youth deserve to have their voices heard. AB 46 will establish a 25-member youth commission that will serve as a statewide advisory body to the state government. At least half of the commissioners must have experienced youth homelessness, foster care, juvenile incarceration, or have special needs to ensure representation from traditionally underserved groups. The Commission’s duties will include examining and discussing policy, holding meetings and roundtable discussions with youth advocates and the public, and investing in youth by providing grants, with strict oversight mechanisms, to programs that seek to address youth concerns. Our democracy is better served when everyone, especially youth, is given an opportunity to contribute their own unique and invaluable perspectives in policy decisions that have far-reaching ramifications for our future generations”

According to the California Coalition For Youth, one of the sponsors and supporters of the bill, “All too often, the state government and adults make critical decisions on policy affecting the lives of young Californians, without any direct input from the youth themselves. Now more than ever, issues affecting youth have become more pressing, such as climate change, racial justice and gun safety, and young people find themselves frustrated with their lack of participation in shaping their futures. Furthermore, foster youth, incarcerated youth, and youth who suffer from other adverse childhood experiences seldom have the resources to advocate for themselves. There is a lack of state leadership on engaging local youth organizations and unifying them under a single goal: empowering youth.”

As a policy consideration, with the twenty-five Commissioner membership and six non-voting members, the author may want to consider decreasing the total membership to allow for the executive director to be able to better handle management and logistics for the commission.

PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 1858 (Rivas, 2020) would have established the California Youth Empowerment Commission. Disposition: Assembly Accountability & Administrative Review

SB 421 (Pan, 2019) Establishes the Children’s Cabinet of California to serve, until January 1, 2025, as an advisory body responsible for improving the collaboration among agencies that provide services to the children and youth of the state. Disposition: Held Senate Appropriations

AB 2252 (DeSaulnier, 2008) would have established the California Youth Council, a private, nonprofit Council to better ensure that the developmental needs of youth in California are met. Disposition: Vetoed.

DOUBLE REFERRAL: This bill has been double referred. Should it pass this committee, it will be re-referred to the Assembly Human Services Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

All Saints Church Foster Care Project
Alliance for Boys and Men of Color

Alliance for Children's Rights
American Academy of Pediatrics, California
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Association of Student Councils
California Coalition for Youth
California League of Conservation Voters
California Youth Connection (CYC)
Californians for Justice
Children Now
Children's Network of Solano County
Doing Good Works
Home Start, INC
Inland Empire United, a Project of Tides Advocacy
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Larkin Street Youth Services
League of Women Voters of California
Lyric
Mental Health Association of San Francisco
Mi Familia Vota
Mid-city Community Advocacy Network
National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform
Nextgen California
Public Counsel
San Francisco Youth Commission
Simi Valley Democratic Club
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
The Unity Council
Vacaville Police Activities League
Voices Youth Centers
Westcoast Children's Clinic
Youth Forward

Opposition

None on file

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