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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### **AB 1400 (Soria) - Community colleges: Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program**

**Version:** March 24, 2025  
**Urgency:** No  
**Hearing Date:** August 25, 2025

**Policy Vote:** ED. 7 - 0  
**Mandate:** No  
**Consultant:** Lenin Del Castillo

**Bill Summary:** This bill requires the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor's Office to establish a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program that would authorize 15 community college districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN) degree.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

- The Chancellor's Office indicates that there could be one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs for each pilot district to create and implement a BSN degree program, ranging from \$80,000 to \$138,000 per district. These costs would encompass any updates to the design of new nursing academic standards, student learning outcomes, updates to existing curriculum that would be needed to satisfy the program, and implementation of other coursework. However, the Chancellor's Office believes these costs are consistent with recent state budget actions to implement new academic programs and curriculum and therefore, they could be absorbable within existing resources.
- The Chancellor's office estimates one-time General Fund workload costs of up to \$33,000 to develop the application for the pilot program, issue guidance, and provide technical assistance.
- This bill could result in additional, unknown General Fund costs for the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program and submit a report to the Legislature. This may also impact the ability of the LAO to fulfill other existing or future legislative mandates and requests, as the LAO's budget is subject to the Legislature's constitutional spending cap.

**Background:** Under existing law, the primary mission of the California State University (CSU) is to offer undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master's degree in the liberal arts and sciences and professional education including teacher education. The CSU is authorized to establish two-year programs only when mutually agreed upon by the Trustees and the CCC Board of Governors. The CSU is also authorized to jointly award the doctoral degree with the University of California (UC) and with one or more independent institutions of higher education.

The UC is authorized to provide undergraduate and graduate instruction and has exclusive jurisdiction in public higher education over graduate instruction in the

professions of law, medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine. The UC is also the primary state-supported academic agency for research.

Under existing law, the mission and function of the CCCs is the offering of academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCCs are authorized to grant the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science degrees. The community colleges are also required to offer learning supports to close learning gaps, English as a Second Language instruction, and adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the postsecondary level.

**Proposed Law:** This bill requires the Chancellor's Office to develop a BSN Program that authorizes select community college districts to offer a BSN degree. It limits the pilot program to 15 community college districts statewide and requires the Chancellor to identify eligible districts based on the following criteria:

- 1) The Chancellor's Office is encouraged to ensure there is equitable access between the northern, central, and southern parts of the state to the pilot program.
- 2) Priority is to be given to CCC districts in underserved nursing areas, as defined.
- 3) Priority is to be given to CCC districts where the service area of the CCC district includes communities with persistent poverty.
- 4) CCC districts must have a nationally accredited nursing program.

This bill requires that a community college district selected for the pilot program retain its associate degree in nursing program. It also limits the total number of associate degree in nursing and bachelor of science in nursing students to the district's associate degree in nursing class size approved by the Board of Registered Nursing. It further limits the total number of participants in a pilot program to 25 percent of that class size or 35 students, whichever is greater.

This bill allows community college districts without a nationally accredited nursing program, but that are in "candidate" status, to be provisionally selected to participate in this pilot program and commence the program upon final accreditation, as specified. This bill further requires that priority be given to CCC districts located in the Central Valley. If a district that is provisionally selected is found to be making untimely progress toward accreditation, after notice and an opportunity to cure, the Chancellor's Office may withdraw the provisional selection and may select a different CCC district to participate in the pilot program.

This bill requires the Chancellor's Office to develop a process designed to assist CCC nursing programs applying for national accreditation for the purpose of qualifying for the pilot program, and that assistance be made available to community college districts upon request.

This bill requires each participating district to give priority registration for enrollment in the pilot program to students with an associate degree in nursing from that district.

This bill requires the LAO to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program to determine the effectiveness of the program and the need to continue or expand the program, as specified. This bill also requires each participating district to submit the information necessary for this evaluation, as determined by the LAO, to the Chancellor's Office.

This bill exempts a Bachelor of Science in Nursing offered under the pilot program from being subject to the CCC bachelor's degree approval process outlined in existing law.

The bill's provisions would sunset on January 1, 2035.

**Related Legislation:** AB 2104 (Soria, 2024) would have the required Chancellor's Office to develop a BSN Pilot Program that authorized select community college districts to offer a BSN degree. The bill was vetoed by the Governor with the following message:

***I support the author's intent to expand access to baccalaureate nursing degree programs in underserved communities. The 2024 Budget Agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program, which may be used to develop or expand Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) partnerships with higher education institutions. These types of partnerships have proven successful in expanding BSN access for community college students and increasing the number of BSN degree recipients. All segments of higher education should continue to focus on building these programs together, and I am concerned this bill could inadvertently undermine that collaboration.***

***Additionally, in recent years, both the CCC and the CSU have been provided with expanded authority to offer independent programs. Given these major changes, a pause should be taken to understand their full impact before additional authorities are granted.***

SB 895 (Roth, 2024) would have required the Chancellor's Office to establish a BSN Pilot Program that would have authorized 10 community college districts to offer a BSN degree. The bill was vetoed by the Governor with the following message:

***I appreciate the author's commitment to expanding access to baccalaureate nursing degree programs for community college students. The 2024 Budget Agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program, which may be used to develop or expand Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) partnerships with higher education institutions. These types of partnerships have proven successful in expanding BSN access for community college students and increasing the number of BSN degree recipients. All segments of higher education should continue to focus on building these programs together, and I am concerned this bill could inadvertently undermine that collaboration.***

***Additionally, in recent years, both the CCC and the CSU have been provided with expanded authority to offer independent programs. Given***

***these major changes, a pause should be taken to understand their full impact before additional authorities are granted.***

**Staff Comments:** The Chancellor's Office indicates there could be one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs for each pilot district to create and implement a Bachelor of Science of Nursing degree program. These costs would encompass any updates to the design of new nursing academic standards, student learning outcomes, any updates to existing curriculum that would be needed to satisfy the program, and implement other coursework. However, the Chancellor's Office indicates that these costs are consistent with recent state budget actions to implement new academic programs and curriculum and could be absorbable. For example, the 2021 State Budget included \$5.6 million for the California Community Colleges to implement the California State University ethnic studies graduation requirement and 115 colleges received an allocation of approximately \$48,000.

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