
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1400
Author: Soria (D), et al.
Amended: 8/29/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/9/25

AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Laird

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/29/25

AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 6/3/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Community colleges: Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program

SOURCE: United Nurses Associations of California

DIGEST: This bill requires the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor's Office to establish a Community College Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program that would authorize 10 community college districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Differentiates the missions and functions of public and independent institutions of higher education. Under these provisions:
 - a) 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.

- b) The UC provides 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.
 - c) The independent institutions of higher education requires undergraduate and graduate instruction and research in accordance with their respective missions.
 - d) The mission and function of the CCC is to offer academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCC is authorized to grant the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science degrees. The CCCs 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. (Education Code (EC) § 66010.4)
- 2) Authorizes the CCC Board of Governors, in consultation with the CSU and the UC, to establish baccalaureate degree programs that do not duplicate a baccalaureate degree program offered by the CSU or UC. Allows for the approval of 30 CCC baccalaureate degree programs per academic year. Current law further requires the CCC Chancellor to consult with and seek feedback from the CSU Chancellor, the UC President and the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities on proposed baccalaureate degree programs, as specified, and establishes a mechanism for the assessment, consultation, and approval of programs where duplication is identified, as specified. (EC § 78040 et seq.)

This bill:

- 1) Notwithstanding provisions in existing law that delineate the mission and functions of the CCCs, CSU, UC, and independent institutions of higher education.

- 2) Requires the Chancellor's Office to develop a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program that would authorize 10 CCC districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree.
- 3) Requires that the Chancellor identify and select eligible CCC districts based on the following criteria:
 - a) 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.
 - b) Priority is to be given to CCC districts in underserved nursing areas, as defined.
 - c) Priority is to be given to CCC districts where the service area of the CCC district includes communities with persistent poverty.
 - d) Community college districts must have a nationally accredited nursing program.
- 4) Requires that a CCC district selected for the pilot program retain its associate degree in nursing program.
- 5) Limits the total number of associate degree in nursing and bachelor of science in nursing students at a CCC district to the CCC district's associate degree in nursing class size approved by the Board of Registered Nursing (BRN). 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.
- 6) Allows CCC 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 and the Inland Empire. If a CCC 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.

- 7) 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 CCC districts upon request.
- 8) Requires each participating district to give priority registration for enrollment in the pilot program to students with an associate degree in nursing from that CCC district.
- 9) Requires that the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) 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 further requires each participating CCC district to submit the information necessary for this evaluation, as determined by the LAO, to the Chancellor's Office.
- 10) 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.
- 11) Defines for purposes of this bill, "underserved nursing area" to mean a registered Nurse (RN) shortage area designated at a high-, medium-, or low-severity level as identified by the Department of Health Care Access and Information.
- 12) Sunsets this bill's provision on January 1, 2035.

Comments

- 1) *Need for this bill.* According to the author, "California's current healthcare workforce development apparatus is not equipped to handle the growing nursing needs of the state, especially in disadvantaged communities in more rural parts of the state. While California's Community College system can reach these communities and does offer associates degrees in nursing, the needs of the healthcare workforce more frequently demand a bachelor's degree. This level of degree is exclusive in California to private institutions that are prohibitively expensive or the UC and CSU systems that have limited capacity and difficulty serving areas of the state with the highest need. In order to meet our nursing workforce needs and extend these career opportunities to Californians throughout the state, we must expand the role of our community college system. AB 1400 will take the first steps in this process by allowing a

limited number of campuses to expand their nursing programs to offer Bachelors of Science in nursing degree.”

- 2) *Shifts CCCs from their original mission.* The state has four segments of higher education: three public and one private. Each plays a vital and unique role for the state. Their mission statements are outlined in state statute. The CCCs are to have an open admission policy and bear the most extensive responsibility for lower-division undergraduate instruction. Its primary areas of mission include instruction leading to associate degrees and university transfer, vocational instruction, and remedial education. Despite the differentiation of mission, the Legislature has authorized the CSU and CCCs to go beyond their original mission to offer doctoral degree and baccalaureate degree programs, respectively, so long as programs do not duplicate those offered by the other segments with primary jurisdiction. Further expansion of CCC baccalaureate degrees as proposed in this bill would signal the Legislature’s willingness to allow CCCs to deviate further from their institutional mission, duplicate programs offered by the other segments with primary jurisdiction, and bypass the existing CCC baccalaureate approval process.
- 3) *Related budget agreement to expand access.* The 2024 Budget agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, to the CCC system for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program. Moneys allocated to this program may be used to develop or expand associate-level degree programs at the CCCs while also explicitly allowing for the use of those funds to develop or expand Bachelor of Science in Nursing partnerships with CSU, UC, and independent nonprofit colleges. This framework reflects a much more collaborative approach to strengthen the nursing workforce pipeline at both the associate and baccalaureate levels. Proposals to authorize independent baccalaureate degree programs at CCCs, as proposed in this bill, were not included in the negotiated framework.
- 4) *State investment in CCC associate degree in nursing programs.* Of California’s three public higher education segments, only the CCCs offer associate-level nursing programs. Numerous legislative efforts and investments have been made to expand CCC associate degree in nursing enrollments and improve retention to facilitate the expansion of associate degree in nursing programs. See the policy committee analysis for more information. These investments demonstrate the state’s willingness to invest in associate-level programs and demonstrate a recognition of their value to the state.

- 5) *Is this the appropriate solution?* If it is the desire of the Legislature to expand Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree programs, arguably, more effective and efficient alternatives do not require a departure from the CCC's mission to expand and streamline Bachelor of Science in Nursing pathways between CCCs and public universities or nonprofit colleges. Further, in its recommendation for alternatives to the original CCC baccalaureate degree pilot program, the LAO's analysis notes that some CCCs have existing agreements with baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. Improving alignment between CCC and the universities could increase the number of CCC students who ultimately obtain a bachelor's degree and reduce the amount of time students take to obtain their degree. The LAO report further asserts that such partnerships could not only be more cost-effective but also benefit more students (including place-bound students), thereby having a more widespread impact.
- 6) *Not all CCC nursing programs are accredited.* Accreditation acts as a measure of quality that verifies a program meets standards of educational quality set by a recognized accrediting body. According to the CCC Chancellor's Office, in 2024, of the 77 associate degree for nursing programs, 28 are nationally accredited, 27 by the Accreditation Commission for Education on Nursing (ACEN), and one by the Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation. Nine are candidates for national accreditation by ACEN. All programs have BRN approval. BRN approval ensures compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, whereas accreditation provides a baseline measure of program quality and supports transferability of credits for students seeking an advanced degree. Accreditation also enables students to qualify for federal financial aid. This bill restricts participation in the pilot program to nationally accredited CCC nursing programs but allows a non-accredited CCC program to be provisionally selected as they work toward obtaining accreditation.
- 7) *Nursing programs in California.* Graduates of associate or bachelor nursing degree programs may sit for nurse licensure exams and become licensed RN. Notably, licensure may be achieved with an associate degree. The state's BRN approves all of California's pre-licensure nursing programs offered by public and private colleges and makes decisions about the number of students that new and existing nursing programs are allowed to enroll. The number of nursing programs in the state totals 152, with 101 public, 92 associate degrees in nursing, 47 bachelor of science in nursing, and 13 Entry Level Master's (ELM) programs. According to the most recent BRN annual school report (2022-2023), California graduated about 13,900 students in 2022-23 from RN

programs (associate, bachelor's, and ELM combined), which represents a 23.9 percent increase in student completions since 2013-14 (11,291). Completion rates are expected to increase. The 2019-20 academic year was the first year that the number and percentage of bachelor's degree completions surpassed the associate degree completions. The trend continues to persist. The number of joint associate degrees in nursing and bachelor's programs has increased over the last 10 years. All schools are required to provide clinical instruction with clinical placement in a health care facility in each phase of the educational process. Students must pass a national licensure examination to earn a license. <https://www.rn.ca.gov/forms/reports.shtml#school>

- 8) *Enrollment decisions controlled by the licensing board.* The BRN is one of a few licensing boards that continues to actively approve educational programs and make enrollment decisions. According to a recent state audit of the BRN, two of the key factors that should be included in the BRN's enrollment decisions are the forecasted supply of nurses that the state will need to fulfill demand and the available number of clinical placement slots. The audit found that the BRN has failed to gather and use sufficient data related to both of these factors to appropriately inform its enrollment decisions.
- 9) *Statewide workforce shortage projected to close, and regional workforce disparities may persist.* State forecasts of the RN workforce reports provide both state-level and regional projections. The Institute for Health Policy Studies at the University of California, San Francisco, conducted the 2024 reports, "Regional Forecasts of the Registered Nurse Workforce in California," and "Forecasts of the Registered Nurse Workforce in California" which find that statewide forecasts have projected that a shortage exists now but that it will abate over the next few years. Projections indicate that rising numbers of nursing enrollments will close the current shortage of RNs by 2028. Noting that after decreases in new RN education enrollments and graduations during the pandemic, RN schools have returned to growth. This growth has been concentrated in private and bachelor's degree programs. Regional projections indicate that all regions of California face a shortage of RNs, but the degree of shortage varies widely, as does the projected growth of RN supply, particularly in the Central Valley, Central Coast, and San Francisco Bay Area. These disparities suggest that healthcare demand in some regions may fall below population needs, especially when compared to national benchmarks. Factors such as RN degree program graduates, inter-regional migration, and employment rates can influence future workforce projections. The report further notes that regional healthcare and education leaders should closely monitor these variables—along with faculty shortages, clinical placement

availability, reliance on contract nurses, and new student enrollments in nursing programs to determine whether and the extent to which local nursing degree program--should expand. <https://www.rn.ca.gov/pdfs/forms/fogCrecast2023.pdf>
<https://www.rn.ca.gov/pdfs/forms/forecast2024.pdf>

- 10) *Duplication of degree programs among CCC, CSU, and UC indicates that California needs better higher education coordination.* All of California's public education institutions share a commitment to work together to ensure that parts of the system work for all Californians. The assignment of distinct missions is important as it helps to justify allocation of state resources for three separate public university systems (CCC, CSU, and UC), contain growth in costs, and facilitate college access for all eligible California students. Since the defunding of the California Postsecondary Education Commission in 2011, California has not had a statewide coordinating entity for higher education. The absence of a higher education coordinating entity has hindered the state's ability to review degree programs to align with state and workforce needs. In its place, changes to higher education's blueprint are being made one legislative proposal at a time in a piecemeal way, which could result in an uncoordinated and fragmented system. Although this bill is limited to nursing programs, it establishes a precedent for permitting duplication of degree programs and expands CCC's ability to establish baccalaureate degrees independent from California's other public universities.
- 11) *Related Legislation.* AB 2104 (Soria, 2024), similar to this bill, 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) nearly identical to this bill 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.

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

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis, this bill would have the following 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/29/25)

United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals
(Source)

Allan Hancock College

Alvarado Parkway Institute Behavioral Health System

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees California

Antelope Valley Community College District

Antelope Valley Economic Development & Growth Enterprise

Asian American Pacific Islander Trustees and Administrators

Association of California Community College Administrators

Bakersfield College

Butte-Glenn Community College District

Cabrillo College

California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce

California Association for Health Services at Home

California Association of Latino Community College Trustees and Administrators

California Community Colleges Women's Caucus

California Federation of Teachers

California Hospital Association

California State Association of Counties

Cerritos College

Cerro Coso Community College

Chabot College

Chabot-Las Positas Community College District

Choice Medical Group

Citrus College

City College of San Francisco - Nursing Program

Cleaneearth4kids.org

Clovis Community College
Coast Community College District
College of the Canyons
College of the Desert
College of the Sequoias
College of the Siskiyous
Community College League of California
Community Health Association of Inland Southern Region
Contra Costa College RN Program
Contra Costa Community College District
County Health Executives Association of California
Cuesta College
Cuyamaca College
De Anza College
Desert Healthcare District and Foundation
El Camino College
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
Feather River College
Foothill-De Anza Community College District
Fresno City College
Galleria Medical Clinic
Glendale Community College
Grossmont College
Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District
Healthforce
Imperial Community College District
Imperial Valley College - Nursing & Allied Health Department
Irvine Valley College
Kern Community College District
Las Positas College
Lassen Community College
Legacy MD Medical Group
Long Beach Community College District
Los Angeles Community College District
Los Angeles Unified School District
Maac
Madera Community College
Memorial care, Orange Coast Medical Center
Mendocino-Lake Community College District
Merced College

MiraCosta College
Mt. San Antonio College
Mt. San Jacinto College
Napa Valley College
NextGen California
North Orange County Community College District
Ohlone College
Orange County Regional Consortium
Palomar College
Paradise Valley Hospital
Pasadena Area Community College District
Pasadena City College
Peralta Community College District
Porterville College
Providence
Rancho Santiago Community College District
Reedley Community College
Rio Hondo College
Riverside Community College District
Rural County Representatives of California
Saddleback College
Saint Agnes Medical Center
San Bernardino Community College District
San Diego City College
San Diego College of Continuing Education
San Diego Community College District
San Diego Family Care
San Diego Mesa College
San Diego Miramar College
San Joaquin Delta College
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District
Santa Monica College
Santa Rosa Junior College
Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint Community College District
Sierra College
Solano Community College
South Orange County Community College District
Southwestern College
State Center Community College District
Supervisor Hilda Solis, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

Taft College
The California Community Colleges LGBTQ+ Caucus
Tulare-kings Healthcare Partnership
Urban Counties of California
Ventura County Community College District
Victor Valley College
West Hills Community College District
Yosemite Community College District

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/29/25)

Association of Independent California Colleges & Universities
California Faculty Association
California State University
University of California

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In their letter of support submitted to this Committee, the Community College League states, “AB 1400 directly responds to a national trend of hospitals requiring and preferring to hire BSN-educated nurses, which disadvantages community college nursing students. A 2021 Health Impact report found that 18% of California hospitals surveyed stated that a BSN was required for employment, double the percentage from 2017, and 54.3% reported a preference for hiring BSN nurses. Additionally, 31.5% of nurses with an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) stated that the lack of a BSN degree was given as the reason for their failure to be hired. AB 1400 utilizes California’s community colleges to create an affordable and accessible pathway toward a BSN degree. According to the Board of Registered Nursing, the [CSU] and the [UC] produce around 25% of the total BSN graduates. The remaining 75% of BSN graduates come from private institutions, which have established a hold on nursing education. While private universities may be a good option for some students, it is an unnecessarily expensive option when the local community college could offer the program at a fraction of the cost. Many capable students are priced out of attending private universities or are forced to take out significant loans, creating generational debt.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: The California State University argues, in part, in their opposition letter, “The CSU Chancellor’s Office wrote in opposition, stating that “the CSU is the most diverse public university system in the nation, serving nursing students from all regions and backgrounds at 20 of our 23 universities. The CSU has been working for years to create pathways to increase the number of nurses in California and has developed partnership programs to

facilitate this important effort. The CSU has worked closely with more than 30 community colleges to create streamlined concurrent enrollment and online programs, along with subsequent clinical placement coordination. These initiatives increase capacity and reduce the time to graduation from an average of five or six years to three or four years, increasing the pace at which the CSU can produce nurses serving our state.”

Further, the CSU notes that they believe “the most appropriate and proven path forward to achieve an increase in the number of nurses is through partnership and online programs. CSU universities offer several online associate degrees in nursing (ADN) to BSN programs which serve rural students and allow them to fulfill all upper division coursework remotely while a community health clinical requirement is completed in the student’s local area. In addition, many CSU universities offer concurrent enrollment partnership programs for incoming first-year students with nearby community colleges that offer all coursework online. Clinical placements are provided in a student’s local area. These programs are very effective in serving students in rural areas and increasing the pace at which students can matriculate through the nursing program.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 6/3/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Castillo, Chen, Irwin, Sanchez

Prepared by: Olgalilia Ramirez / ED. / (916) 651-4105
9/2/25 18:22:34

**** END ****