

GOVERNOR'S VETO
AB 1400 (Soria)
As Enrolled September 16, 2025
2/3 vote

SUMMARY

Requires the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to develop a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing (BSN) Pilot Program that authorizes select community college districts (CCD) to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. The bill would limit the pilot program to 10 CCDs statewide and would require the CCCCCO to identify and select eligible community college districts based on specified criteria.

Senate Amendments

Amendments taken in the Senate reduce the number of CCDs from 15 to 10, and specifies that, with respect to CCDs without a nationally accredited nursing program, but that are in "candidate" status, priority for selection in the pilot will be given to CCDs located in the central valley and the Inland Empire.

Governor's Veto Message

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 (BSN) degree.

Last year, I vetoed a nearly identical bill, citing two primary reasons that continue to persist.

First, 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 BSN partnerships with UC, CSU, and independent nonprofit higher education institutions. These 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 must continue to collaborate on building these programs, and returning this bill will ensure those collaborative efforts are not undermined.

Second, in recent years, both the CCC and the CSU have been authorized to offer independent programs outside of their traditional roles, provided they do not duplicate degree offerings of other public segments. I encourage the CCC system to focus on implementing this expanded authority and to ensure that it can continue to make progress on the unique and vital role the CCC plays in serving its students and the state. Given these significant changes, a pause should be maintained to understand their full impact before additional authorities are granted.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

COMMENTS

Master Plan for Higher Education. As outlined in the Master Plan for Higher Education and by state statute, the CCCs are designated to have an open admission policy and bear the most extensive responsibility for lower-division undergraduate instruction. Its three primary areas of mission include education leading to associates degrees and university transfer, career technical

education, and basic skills. The primary mission of the CSU is undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master's degree. The UC was granted the sole authority to independently offer doctoral degrees.

Notwithstanding the differentiation of the mission envisioned by the Master Plan, as outlined in statute, the Legislature authorized the CSU to go beyond its original mission to offer six professional doctoral degrees which include the Au.D, Ed.D, D.P.T., DNP, OTD, and Dr.PH. Each program was individually approved through legislation. Fees were capped at the rate charged at the UC, no additional funding was provided by the state, and these programs were to be implemented without diminishing or reducing enrollment in undergraduate programs. Additionally, the CSU programs that offer applied doctorates were not duplicative of degrees offered by UC.

Is this an appropriate solution? If it is the desire of the Legislature to expand BSN degree programs, arguably a more effective and efficient alternative exists that do not require a departure from the CCC's traditional mission.

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. As noted in their letter of opposition, CSU has helped to develop over 30 concurrent enrollment and online programs. For example, the Tri- County Nursing Pathway is a partnership between Riverside City College and two CSU campuses (Fullerton and San Bernardino) that allows associate degree nursing students to concurrently obtain their bachelor's degrees. Students can enroll in CSU courses while still completing their associate degree requirements, allowing them to obtain their BSN degree with only six additional months of coursework.

As noted in AICCU's letter, the FY 24-25 budget contained \$60 million annually for five years to establish the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program. This program is intended to develop and expand CCC BSN partnerships, including established partnerships with the CSU, the UC, or independent institutions of higher education.

The Governor wrote in his veto of AB 2104 (Soria) of 2024, which is substantively similar to AB 1400 (Soria), that "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."

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. Since the defunding of the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) in 2011, California has not had a statewide coordinating entity for higher education. Prior to its demise, the role of the CPEC included academic program review to coordinate the long-range planning of the state's public higher education systems as a means to ensure that the segments were working together to carry out their individual missions while serving the state's long-range workforce and economic needs.

The absence of a higher education coordinating entity has hindered the state's ability to review degree programs to ensure alignment 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 has arguably resulted in an uncoordinated and fragmented system. Although this bill is limited to one community college baccalaureate degree program, it establishes a precedent for permitting duplication of degree programs and could expand CCC's ability to establish baccalaureate degrees independently from California's other public universities.

According to the Author

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."

Arguments in Support

The Community College League of California wrote in support, noting that "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."

The California Hospital Association wrote in support, stating that "the National Center for Health Workforce projects that by 2037, California will be short more than 65,000 full-time nurses — the third-largest nursing shortage in the U.S. and a sharp increase from 2021, when the state saw a deficit of 40,000 registered nurses. A shortage of this magnitude would severely impact patients, as nurses often serve as their primary point of contact for care, questions, compassion, and more...community colleges play a vital role in providing accessible and quality postsecondary education, particularly for students facing financial, geographical, and logistical challenges — and this innovative solution would help to address California's health care workforce shortage, keeping health care services staffed and available to patients across the state. By expanding baccalaureate degrees in nursing to community colleges, AB 1400 would empower more students to pursue higher education in nursing, helping to meet the demand for highly qualified nurses in health care settings."

Arguments in Opposition

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."

The UC wrote in opposition, noting that "UC appreciates the author's goal of wanting to craft policies to increase the number of nurses in the state. However, there are three major issues that limit the nursing pipeline currently: the need for more clinical placements, the need for better data on placement needs and availability, and the supply of nursing faculty with the appropriate subject matter expertise to provide instruction. AB 1400 would not address the current shortage of nurses and would instead increase the competition for limited clinical placements and qualified faculty for nursing students. We urge the state to evaluate alternative policies that would expand more access to clinical placements for nursing students and address the nursing faculty shortage."

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) also wrote in opposition, stating "rather than compound the existing challenges in the nursing educator pipeline, we believe that the Legislature should instead look to incentivize and promote collaborative, intersegmental partnerships through models such as concurrent enrollment and accelerated pathways. In his veto message of AB 2104 last year, Governor Newsom cited ongoing state funding provided via the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program and...to increase the access to care in rural areas, we believe the Legislature should instead focus on ways to incentivize healthcare professionals to come and live and work in those communities, rather than expanding degree authority."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.

VOTES**ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 10-0-0**

YES: Fong, DeMaio, Boerner, Jeff Gonzalez, Jackson, Muratsuchi, Patel, Celeste Rodriguez, Sharp-Collins, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0-5

YES: 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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Castillo, Chen, Irwin, Sanchez

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNERney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Weber Pierson

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0-6

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Chen, 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, 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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Castillo, Irwin, Johnson, Patel, Sanchez

UPDATED

VERSION: September 16, 2025

CONSULTANT: Kevin Powers / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960

FN: 0002174