

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1547 (Bains) – As Introduced January 6, 2026

Policy Committee: Higher Education Vote: 10 - 0

Urgency: Yes State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the University of California (UC), on or before January 1, 2028, to complete a feasibility study for the establishment of a UC medical school branch campus in Kern County. The bill goes into effect immediately as an urgency measure.

FISCAL EFFECT:

One-time General Fund costs to the UC likely between \$2.6 million and \$3.6 million, to cover staffing costs to lead the study project, conduct required stakeholder engagement, consult with experts, collect and analyze data, write the feasibility report, and provide recommendations.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

With some of the lowest ratios of healthcare providers in the state and a declining number of medical students from rural backgrounds, urgent action is needed to ensure access to quality care. By requiring a feasibility study for a UC medical school in Kern County, AB 1547 paves the way for expanding medical education in the region, ultimately helping to train and retain doctors who understand and are committed to serving rural populations. This investment is essential to building a healthier future for some of California's most underserved communities.

2) **Background. *Medical Professionals in the San Joaquin Valley (SJV)*.** According to a *CalMatters* article from 2024 entitled, "A UC Merced Medical Program is Slowly Taking Shape," the SJV is home to approximately 4.3 million people. The area is also known for having unhealthy air quality, high levels of chronic disease like diabetes and obesity, and insufficient medical providers. The SJV has 47 primary care doctors for every 100,000 residents, in contrast to the San Francisco Bay Area with 80 primary care physicians for every 100,000 people. Similarly, 81 specialists per 100,000 people work in SJV, but the Bay Area has more than twice that number. The article also found that some residents of the SJV

schedule medical appointments over a year in advance because of the lack of doctors available to see them.

Existing UC Medical Education Programs Serving the SJV. Established in 1975, the UC San Francisco (UCSF) Fresno is a graduate medical education campus of the UCSF School of Medicine positioned to address the severe shortage of physicians in the SJV. According to the 2022-23 UCSF Fresno Annual Report, “Improving Health in the San Joaquin Valley,” UCSF Fresno is now the largest academic physician training program in between San Francisco, Sacramento, and Los Angeles. Further, to facilitate UC Merced (UCM) building partnerships with existing UC medical schools and its involvement with academic medicine, UCM partnered with the UC Davis (UCD) School of Medicine to help develop a new medical education program focusing on the health needs of the region. UCSF Fresno, UCM, and UCD partnered to launch the SJV Program in Medical Education (PRIME) in 2011 to recruit and prepare students for future careers in medicine in the SJV. PRIME students complete their basic sciences/pre-clinical education at UCD, then complete most of their required third-year core clerkships at UCSF Fresno, with options for selecting the amount of time spent in the fourth year at UCSF Fresno or UCD.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 1361 (Bains), of the current legislative session, is substantially similar to this bill. AB 1361 was held on this committee’s suspense file.

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