
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1547 (Bains) - University of California: branch campus of a school of medicine in the County of Kern: feasibility study

Version: January 6, 2026

Urgency: Yes

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: ED. 6 - 1

Mandate: No

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill requires the University of California (UC), by January 1, 2028, to complete a feasibility study for the establishment of a UC medical school branch campus in Kern County.

Fiscal Impact:

- The UC estimates General Fund costs of between \$2.6 million and \$3.6 million to conduct the feasibility study. This estimate includes staffing costs to lead the project, conduct convenings and stakeholder engagement, consult with experts, collect and analyze data, provide recommendations, and write the feasibility report.
- This bill could lead to one-time General Fund cost pressures in the low hundreds of millions for a new medical education building and ongoing General Fund cost pressures of between \$40 million and \$45 million each year for operational costs.

Background: Existing law, under Section 9, Article IX of the State Constitution creates the UC to be administered by the Regents with full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to ensure security of its funds, compliance with the terms of its endowments, statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property and the purchase of materials, goods and services.

Existing law creates the UC Kern County Medical Education Endowment Fund in the State Treasury to support potential development of a UC medical school in Kern County. Funds received by the UC or the Controller, for specified purposes of the fund must be deposited into the UC Kern County Medical Education Endowment Fund.

Existing law creates the UC San Francisco (UCSF), San Joaquin Valley Regional Campus Medical Education Endowment Fund. It stipulates that upon appropriation by the Legislature, moneys in the endowment fund must be allocated to the UC to support the annual operating costs for the development, operation, and maintenance of a branch campus of the UCSF School of Medicine in the San Joaquin Valley. Existing law requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature and a determination by the Controller of sufficient funds in the endowment fund, moneys in the fund to be used to cover the UC's estimated costs of applying for and obtaining approval and accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, as provided.

Proposed Law: This bill requires the UC, by January 1, 2028, to complete a feasibility study and reasonably attempt to consult with the specified local stakeholders, to determine the steps necessary to establish a branch campus of an existing UC medical school in Kern County, and include in the feasibility study a comprehensive analysis of the requirements, challenges, and opportunities related to establishing a branch campus of an existing UC medical school in Kern County, including, but not limited to, the identification of potential sites for the branch campus of a medical school; an assessment of construction and infrastructure needs for the branch campus of a medical school and an assessment of the ability to comply with all the resource requirements of the LCME; recommended recruitment strategies for qualified faculty and staff; and an evaluation of the ability to comply with the accreditation requirements of the LCME as a branch campus.

This bill requires the UC to submit the feasibility study, including detailed findings, recommendations, and an implementation timeline to the Governor and the Legislature, as specified and available on its website.

This bill declares the bill as an urgency measure in order to address the significant adverse health impacts of the shortage of physicians serving the residents of Kern County.

Related Legislation: AB 1852 (Bains, 2026) would create a fallback mechanism for establishing a public medical school in Kern County if, by July 1, 2027, the UC Office of the President has not taken formal steps to establish a school of medicine in Kern County. AB 1852 failed passage in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

AB 2357 (Bains, Chapter 959, Statutes of 2024) in part, establishes the UC Kern County Medical Education Endowment Fund for the purposes of supporting the operating costs associated with establishing a branch campus of an existing UC medical school in Kern County.

Staff Comments: This bill requires the completion of a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a branch campus of an existing UC medical school in Kern County, including an analysis of potential sites, infrastructure needs, accreditation requirements, faculty recruitment strategies, curriculum development, financial needs, and graduate medical education opportunities. 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.”

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