

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1669 (Pacheco)

As Amended August 13, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes a leave of absence policy requirement for postsecondary education institutions for all students who are experiencing a medical or mental health condition.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Removes the requirement that each postsecondary education institution must provide reasonable accommodations to a student who is facing a medical challenge so that the student may complete their course of study and research.
- 2) Clarifies that a postsecondary education institution may impose conditions upon the student's return from medical leave to a campus if the student was a direct threat to the safety or health of others.
- 3) Clarifies that the measure does not prevent a postsecondary education institution from investigating and adjudicating a violation of the student code of conduct even if the student has taken or currently on a medical leave from the institution.
- 4) Stipulates that if any provision of the measure conflicts with federal law or federal regulations, the conflicting provision is rendered inoperative for the duration of the conflict without affecting the totality of the whole of the measure.
- 5) Clarifies that nothing in the measure will require a postsecondary education institution to waive competency, clinical, laboratory, or other graduation or licensure requirements established by a postsecondary education institution, accrediting agency or government licensing authority.
- 6) Defines "adjudication procedures", "student,", and "student code of conduct" for purposes of the measure.

COMMENTS

Leave of absence policies at California postsecondary education institutions. Each of the public higher education segments provides mental health services to their students; however, none of the segments have a systemwide policy to permit a student to take a leave of absence for a medical or mental-health condition.

There are two provisions of State law which permit certain students the ability to take a sanctioned leave of absence and return to the institution with the same academic standing: (1) parental leave for graduate students who have either just given birth or whose partner has just given birth; and (2) military leave for students who are called to active duty by the Armed Forces.

Despite the gap in State law and the lack of a systemwide policy, some campuses have taken it upon themselves to provide students with the ability to take a medical leave. The policies of the

campuses vary in the duration of the leave and the terms of eligibility for the leave. Some California State University campuses allow for up to four weeks of medical leave; while others allow for up to two semesters of leave if the student was in good academic standing prior to the medical leave. Some UC campuses allow for medical withdraw with no guarantee of readmission to the student's program of study.

California Community Colleges are considered an open-access institution; and therefore, while students are required to be "admitted" through an application process, the system is not allowed to deny anyone re-entry or re-access to the system as a whole. The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges adopts regulations for the operation of all 73 community college districts. Each community college district must adopt and implement the regulations as district policies and procedures. California Code of Regulations Title 5, Section 550204 permits a student to withdraw from a course by the fourth week of an academic term without penalty to their transcript or grade point average. The student who seeks to withdraw after the fourth week is permitted an excused withdraw if the student has an extenuating circumstance which includes accidents, illness, or other circumstances beyond the student's control. A community college district is permitted to refund tuition for any student who is granted a withdraw from a course due to an extenuating circumstance.

This measure will provide continuity in postsecondary education institution's medical leave policies across the State by ensuring all students are afforded the ability to take a medical leave without academic penalties or prescriptive medical documentation demonstrating the medical condition. Furthermore, this measure will provide equitable access for all students by permitting students to seamlessly return to coursework after a medical leave without having to re-apply for admission to their campus or academic program.

According to the Author

As delineated by the author, "nearly half of college students endure mental health challenges, including 37% who struggle with depression and nearly one-third who experience anxiety. While research indicates that poor mental health impedes academic performance, college students don't always have easy access to appropriate tools or institutional support to manage these challenges. In some situations, the best solution for a student may be to take a leave of absence from school to focus on their mental or physical health. However, not all California colleges and universities offer a clear leave-of-absence framework. While some schools allow a student to take a medical leave of absence, others require that a student facing a mental health crisis completely withdraw. In some cases, students must reapply with no guaranteed pathway to readmission."

Arguments in Support

The Cal State Student Association is supportive of the measure as "mental health challenges continue to be one of the leading barriers to student success. When students are unable to access the flexibility they need during periods of illness or crisis, they may withdraw permanently, lose academic momentum, or face unnecessary financial and administrative burdens. By establishing written medical leave policies, protecting students from being required to formally withdraw in order to take leave, and ensuring students are informed of available options, AB 1669 will help students remain connected to their educational goals while prioritizing their health. For CSU students, predictable and transparent leave policies can improve retention and support successful degree completion. Students who take time away for legitimate medical or mental health reasons should have confidence that they can return to continue their education without unnecessary

obstacles. AB 1669 advances that goal while promoting greater consistency across California's public and private institutions of higher education."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) The University of California estimates one-time General Fund costs of up to \$2 million for administrative and technical startup costs and approximately \$1 million ongoing for maintenance and administrative costs. These costs include the updating of programming for new policy definitions and to allow students to drop all classes without providing an official notice of withdrawal.
- 2) The California State University estimates ongoing General Fund costs in the mid-hundreds of thousands of dollars each year for campuses to provide ongoing case management compliance monitoring, and additional one-time General Fund costs of \$440,000 or \$20,000 per campus to update systemwide leave policies, computer systems and procedures, and systems/process updates and website changes.
- 3) The Chancellor's Office estimates one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs ranging between \$2.4 million to \$5.4 million for community college districts statewide to develop and implement a new medical leave of absence policy, including the adoption of a formal medical leave of absence status that preserves a student's enrollment, academic standing, and guaranteed right to return without reapplication.

VOTES:

ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 9-0-1

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Celeste Rodriguez

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

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, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Chen, Garcia, Lackey, Ramos, Celeste Rodriguez

UPDATED

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