
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1829 **Hearing Date:** June 3, 2026
Author: Fong
Version: April 6, 2026
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Michelle Nguyen

Subject: Community colleges: CalWORKs Recipients Education Program: services.

SUMMARY

This bill allows the California Community Colleges (CCC) to use funds appropriated for the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program for direct aid designed to meet ongoing basic needs services and resources, as specified. This bill also allows CCCs to waive the requirement for employers to contribute 25% of the wage for workstudy positions funded by the program if the number of on-campus and off-campus workstudy positions will not decrease.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program within the CCC system, and states it is the intent of the Legislature that the services provided by the program assist CalWORKs recipients prepare for employment. (Education Code (EC) § 79200 and 79201)
- 2) Requires, to the extent that funding is provided in the annual Budget Act, a CCC to receive funding for educational services provided to CalWORKs recipients based on the number of CalWORKs recipients enrolled at the CCC and the scope and number of programs that the college plans to offer to assist CalWORKs recipients obtain employment. (EC § 79202)
- 3) Authorizes, to the extent that funding is provided in the annual Budget Act, a CCC to use funding received for curriculum development and design for CalWORKs recipients for all of the following purposes:
 - a) To develop or redesign vocational curricula for CalWORKs recipients so that courses may be offered as part of a short-term intensive program.
 - b) To link CalWORKs courses to job placement through work experience and internships.
 - c) To redesign basic education and English as a second language courses so that they may be integrated into vocational training programs.
 - d) To expand the use of telecommunications in providing the new curricula to CalWORKs recipients. (EC § 79203)

- 4) Requires, to the extent that funding is provided in the annual Budget Act, a community college district (CCD) to receive funding for purposes of providing special services to CalWORKs recipients, to assist CalWORKs recipient students and those students transitioning off CalWORKs in achieving long-term self-sufficiency through coordinated student services offered at a CCC. (EC § 79204)
- 5) Authorizes that special services may include any of the following services: a) job placement; b) coordination with county welfare offices and other local agencies, including, but not limited to, local workforce investment boards; c) child care and workstudy; d) instruction; e) postemployment skills training and related skills training; and f) campus-based case management, as specified. (EC § 79204)
- 6) Requires that funds allocated for the purposes of workstudy be used for payments to those employers that currently participate in campus-based workstudy programs or are providing work experiences that are directly related to and in furtherance of student educational programs and work participation requirements. Requires the specified payments not exceed 75% of the wage for the workstudy positions and that employers pay at least 25% of the wage for the workstudy positions. (EC § 79205)
- 7) Requires that funds allocated for the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program shall be budgeted to meet the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families maintenance of effort requirement, as defined, and may not be expended in any way that would cause their disqualification as a federally allowable maintenance of effort expenditure. (EC § 79209)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Allows CCCs to use funds appropriated for the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program for direct aid designed to meet ongoing basic needs services and resources, which includes, but is not limited to, housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, childcare services and resources, and mental health services and resources.
- 2) Allows CCCs to waive the requirement for employers to contribute 25% of the wage for workstudy positions for workstudy funded by the program if the number of on-campus and off-campus workstudy positions will not decrease.
- 3) Requires that special services provided through the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program assist CalWORKs recipient students and those students transitioning off CalWORKs in achieving *economic mobility*, in addition to *long-term self-sufficiency*.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "Supporting students' essential needs is fundamental to long-term self-efficiency. ... [CalWORKs] REP students are typically single parents with childcare needs who may be unable to visit the college

computer lab during evenings and weekends due to work and family responsibilities. Currently, CalWORKs REP funding has limited flexibility to provide students with direct financial support through aid payments, vouchers, or reimbursements. As a result, colleges face constraints in providing adequate resources and support to CalWORKs REP students. ... AB 1829 strengthens financial support for low-income student-parents participating in the California Community Colleges CalWORKs Recipient Education Program (REP) by allowing the use of existing program funds to provide basic needs assistance.

In addition, CalWORKs REP requires employers that offer work-study to recipients to provide a 25% match for work-study wages. This requirement often serves as a disincentive for employers to participate in the work-study program, particularly off-campus employers. As a result, students may have fewer opportunities to secure work-study placements that align with their educational and professional goals. ... The bill expands access to off-campus work-study opportunities through employer match flexibility.”

- 2) ***CalWORKs Recipients Education Program purpose and funding.*** According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) 2019 report on the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program, “in fiscal year 1997-98, the California Community Colleges received \$65 million in new funding to establish a CalWORKs program on every campus. Colleges were to utilize the funds to work in partnership with their local county welfare departments to assist welfare recipient students in achieving long-term family self-sufficiency through education, the provision of work study and other supportive services.” However, these funds were significantly reduced during state budget deficits in 2002 and 2009.

The 2014 Budget Act codified the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program within the CCC system, with the services provided by the program intended to assist CalWORKs recipients prepare for employment, and provided funding of \$35.5 million. As of the 2025 Budget Act, the program is funded at a level of \$56.9 million and receives an annual cost-of-living adjustment.

The program served 25,200 students who were CalWORKs recipients in 2024-25, bouncing back from a low of 11,000 students in 2021-22, and the program allocates funding for the following services described in statute: job placement; coordination with county welfare offices and other local agencies, such as local workforce investment boards; childcare and workstudy; instruction; postemployment skills training; and campus-based case management.

- 3) ***Growing statewide fund balance for CalWORKs Recipients Education Program.*** The CCCCOC states that fund balances for the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program have grown in the recent years and are currently roughly \$30 million across the CCC system. Program funds were able to carry over funds across years starting in 2019-20, and a growing balance has been attributed to enrollment declines that took place during the COVID-19 Pandemic. To be eligible for this program, a student must be a CalWORKs recipient and enrolled in CCC coursework, and many CalWORKs recipients were unable to enroll in online classes because they were caring for children who had to stay home during the pandemic.

In addition, there was a significant influx of federal COVID relief funds to support higher education systems during the pandemic, and it is likely that CCDs were spending down their federal COVID relief funds in the early years of the pandemic, which may have created larger than usual fund balances for this program. The author proposes to amend the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program to expand how the program funds can be spent, in part to address the significant fund balance for this program.

- 4) ***Current prohibition on providing direct aid for this program with Proposition 98 funds.*** In 2024-25, the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program was funded at \$63.6 million, which was comprised of \$55.6 million in Proposition 98 General Fund and \$8 million in federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds. Of this total, roughly \$4.9 million was spent on direct student support, all of which were paid with federal funds, and the CCCCCO's legal team indicates that colleges are unable to use state funding for this program for direct aid without it being explicitly authorized in statute. Many other CCC categorical programs are permitted to use their funds for direct aid. Any aid provided for a student, including direct aid provided by the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program, counts toward a student's financial aid package, and the amount of aid provided for a student would not be able to exceed that student's unmet need, as defined by federal financial aid rules.
- 5) ***Employer contribution to workstudy positions.*** An eligible use of funds from the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program is to pay for workstudy positions for students who are CalWORKs recipients. Ideally, a student's workstudy position under this program is aligned with their educational goals, and that may include for-profit and non-profit employers who are on-campus or off-campus. Under existing law, funds from the program would fund 75% of the workstudy position wages, and an employer would contribute the remaining 25% of the workstudy position wages. According to the CCCCCO, it can be difficult to get off-campus employers to agree to participate in workstudy, and allowing the employer contribution of 25% to be waived (and otherwise paid for by the program) would help encourage more off-campus employers to participate.

In 2024-25, the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program spent \$5.8 million on workstudy positions, funding 2,374 positions for 1,141 students. Of these workstudy assignments, 57% of the positions required students to work between 20 and 30 hours per week, and 36% of the positions required students to work between 10 and 20 hours per week.

- 6) ***Committee amendments.*** *Committee staff recommends, and the author's office has accepted, amendments as follows:*
 - a) Remove the word "ongoing" from the phrase "ongoing basic needs services and resources".
 - b) Add Assemblymember Schiavo as a coauthor to this bill.

7) ***Related and Prior Legislation.***

AB 363 (Bryan, 2025) would have expanded participation in the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program, would have allowed CCDs to waive the requirement for employers to contribute 25% of the wage for workstudy positions funded by the program, and would have authorized direct aid as an eligible use of funding. AB 363 is similar to AB 1829, except that AB 1829 does not have the same provisions to expand participation in the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program. AB 363 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 860 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 34, Statutes of 2014) establishes the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program within the CCC system, and states it is the intent of the Legislature that the services provided by the program assist CalWORKs recipients prepare for employment.

SUPPORT

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (sponsor)
 Cabrillo Community College District
 CalWORKs Program at San Bernardino Valley College
 Chaffey Community College District
 Clovis Community College
 College of Marin
 College of the Canyons
 Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
 Feather River College
 Fresno City College CalWORKs Program
 Gavilan College
 Glendale Community College District CalWORKs Office
 Kern Community College District
 Los Angeles Trade-Technical College
 Merritt College
 Norco College
 Reedley College CalWORKs Program
 Rio Hondo College
 Riverside Community College District
 San Diego College of Continuing Education
 San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
 San Jose-Evergreen Community College District
 Southwestern Community College District Governing Board
 Student Senate for California Community Colleges
 West Los Angeles College
 Woodland Community College CalWORKs Program
 Several Individuals

OPPOSITION

None received