
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1969
Author: Bonta
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Consultant: Naima Ford Antal
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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Schools Incentive Grant Program

SUMMARY

This bill creates the California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Schools Incentive Grant Program which provides grants to support educational outcomes, reduce child poverty, and advance economic mobility for children and families disproportionately affected by intergenerational poverty by supporting place-based partnerships that provide specified services.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes, in federal law, the Promise Neighborhood program, which provides grants to nonprofit organizations, tribal organizations, or institutions of higher education, which, together with partners, develop and implement plans to significantly improve outcomes of children living in a given neighborhood. (*20 United States Code (U.S.C.) 7274*)
- 2) Establishes the “California Cradle-to-Career Data Systems Act”, which expresses legislative intent to build a data system that services students and families by identifying and tracking predictive indicators to enable parents, teachers, health and human services providers, and policymakers to provide appropriate interventions and supports to address disparities in opportunities and improve outcomes for all students. (*Education Code (EDC) 10850 et seq.*)
- 3) Defines “Community school” to mean a public school serving preschool, transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, with strong and intentional community partnerships ensuring pupil learning and whole child and family development, and specifically includes the following:
 - a. Integrated supports services, including the coordination of trauma-informed health, mental health, and social services that ensure coordination and support with county and local educational agency resources and nongovernmental organizations, and early screening and intervention for learning and other needs.

- b. Family, pupil, schoolsite staff, and community engagement, which may include home visits, home-school collaboration, culturally responsive community partnerships to strengthen family well-being and stability, and school climate surveys.
 - c. Collaborative leadership and practices for educators and administrators, including professional development to transform school culture and climate, that centers on pupil learning and supports mental and behavioral health, trauma-informed care, social-emotional learning, restorative justice, and other key areas relating to pupil learning and whole child and family development.
 - d. Extended learning time and opportunities, including before and after school care and summer programs. (*EDC 8901 (b)*)
- 4) Establishes the CalWORKs program to provide cash assistance and other social services for low-income families through the federal TANF program. Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance through a combination of state, county, and federal TANF funds. (*Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 11200 et seq.*)
 - 5) Establishes the CalFresh program to administer the provision of federal SNAP benefits to families and individuals meeting specified criteria. (*WIC 18900 et seq.*)
 - 6) Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to establish the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to provide food assistance to people who are not eligible for federal SNAP benefits due solely to their immigration status. (*WIC 18930 et seq.*)

This Bill:

- 1) Makes findings and declarations about child poverty and the impact of place-based initiatives.
- 2) Defines “cradle-to-career” to mean a system of integrated services that begins before birth and leads to appropriate postsecondary success, including academic, occupational, and independent living, that benefits the individual and community as a whole.
- 3) Defines “eligible entity” to include all of the following:
 - a. A nonprofit organization that is exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. A nonprofit organization may be a faith-based organization, to the extent permitted by law.
 - b. A public or nonprofit institution of higher education.
 - c. An Indian tribe or tribal organization.
- 4) Requires an eligible entity to work in partnership with at least one local educational agency and one social service agency located within the area served by the place-based partnerships.

- 5) Allows an eligible entity to also work with one or more of the following entities located within the area served by the place-based partnerships:
 - a. A local government agency.
 - b. Health organizations.
 - c. Another eligible entity.
- 6) Defines “grant program” to mean the California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Schools Incentive Grant Program.
- 7) Defines a “community school” to mean a public school with strong and intentional community partnerships ensuring pupil learning and whole child and family development as defined in Education Code 8901.
- 8) Defines a “Promise Neighborhood” to mean a targeted geographic area served by the Promise Neighborhoods program authorized by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 (Public Law 114-95). The program focuses on revitalizing economically disadvantaged communities through the establishment of a cradle-to-career network of services aimed at improving the health, safety, and education of the occupants in the defined area.
- 9) Defines “neighborhood partnership” to include nonprofit and faith-based networks that serve geographically defined areas or neighborhoods based on the level of distress in that area as set by indicators of need. The application may propose to serve multiple non-contiguous areas. Services provided by these networks may include food, housing assistance, access to benefits, mental health, job training, legal services, financial literacy, early childhood development, parenting support, after school enhanced learning, and youth empowerment.
- 10) Defines “regional partnership” to mean partnerships that support multiple populations in neighborhoods, cities, counties, and regions by addressing root cause factors behind poverty, institutional misalignment, and opportunities for meaningful community engagement necessary to ensure that equitable outcomes are achieved at scale. These partnerships seek systems change and community engagement, develop evidence-based strategies, and, where strategies prove successful, promote adoption in the full region.
- 11) Defines “place-based partnership” to include neighborhood partnerships, Promise Neighborhoods, and regional partnerships.
- 12) Establishes the California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community School Incentive Grant Program to be administered by CDSS or another department within the California Health and Human Services Agency, as designated by the Secretary of California Health and Human Services.
- 13) States the purpose of the grant program is to support educational outcomes, reduce child poverty and advance economic mobility for children and families disproportionately affected by intergenerational poverty by supporting place-based partnerships that align

services, address systemic barriers, and improve long-term outcomes through all of the following solutions:

- a. Increasing community health and safety.
 - b. Providing cradle-to-career access to high-quality education and care.
 - c. Connecting residents to quality jobs and in-demand occupations.
 - d. Enabling family-sustaining income and access to affordable high-quality housing, childcare, and health care, including reproductive, maternal, behavioral, and mental health care.
 - e. Providing high-quality support for high-need populations, such as children with disabilities, children experiencing disparity gaps in school performance based on income or racial or ethnic disaggregation, foster youth, child welfare, and justice-involved youth and young adults.
 - f. Connecting individuals to state programs.
 - g. Leveraging federal, local, and private funding for the place-based partnership.
- 14) Requires grants to be awarded to eligible entities that are place-based partnerships.
- 15) States that it is the intent of the Legislature that programs in the continuum should improve academic achievement and equitable social outcomes, including improving outcomes of early development, child and youth social and health development, and college and career readiness, as well as build strong family and community supports to help families move out of poverty.
- 16) Requires CDSS, in consultation with the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education, to develop an application process for eligible entities to apply for the grants.
- 17) Requires CDSS to aim to achieve geographic equity by giving priority to applicants serving remote communities, including rural and tribal communities, through the selection process.
- 18) Requires, for the 2026–27 and 2027–28 fiscal years, CDSS to competitively award grants to place-based partnerships, Promise Neighborhoods, or regional partnerships across the state to be expended for all of the following activities:
- a. Regional or neighborhood partnership development, which may include all of the following:
 - i. Identifying a community lead organization and building local capacity.
 - ii. Convening partner organizations.
 - iii. Engaging community residents.

- iv. Analyzing existing local data.
 - b. Plan development, which may include all of the following:
 - i. Solidifying partnerships.
 - ii. Conducting community asset mapping and needs assessment.
 - iii. Engaging in community-driven planning and prioritization processes.
 - iv. Developing a plan to implement place-based solutions that address at least two of the purposes of the program.
 - c. Implementation, which may include all of the following:
 - i. Launching the approved plan.
 - ii. Leveraging additional federal, state, local, or private funding streams.
 - iii. Conducting progress monitoring and continuous improvement activities.
 - iv. Engaging community residents on an ongoing basis.
 - v. Implementing the cradle-to-career services based on results of the needs analysis described in the application and plans to build system and organizational capacity.
 - vi. Continuously evaluating the success of the program and improving the program based on data and outcomes.
- 19) Requires grant recipients developing new or expanded longitudinal data systems to coordinate and align their data collection and reporting with the Cradle-to-Career Data System.
- 20) Requires CDSS to establish performance standards to measure progress on indicators and results relevant to the evaluation of the grant program.
- 21) Requires the State Department of Education, in consultation with CDSS, to establish a core set of academic results and indicators by which the grant recipients will be measured.
- 22) Requires CDSS to establish a core set of family and community support results and indicators by which the grant recipient will be measured. A grant recipient shall choose to measure and report on two or more family and community support results and indicators.
- 23) Requires CDSS, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to also establish at least two indicators related to health, social and emotional development, mental health, and wellness. A grant recipient may choose to report on additional social or socioemotional indicators, drawn from either of the following:

- a. Existing surveys, including the California Healthy Kids Survey or the YouthTruth Student Survey.
 - b. Other sources, as determined by the eligible entity and their partner agencies.
- 24) Allows CDSS to establish other engagement, academic, and social indicators.
- 25) Requires each grant recipient to prepare and submit an annual report to CDSS that shall include both of the following:
- a. Information about the number and percentage of children, family members, and community members in the area served by the place-based partnerships who are served by the grant recipient, including a description of the number and percentage of children accessing each of the pipeline services and the number of family and community members served by each program.
 - b. Disaggregated data at population and program levels related to the grant recipient's program's success in annual growth along program and project indicators. To the extent feasible, data should be disaggregated by all of the following:
 - i. Gender
 - ii. Major racial and ethnic groups
 - iii. Disability status
 - iv. Economic disadvantaged status
 - v. Information relating to the performance metrics
 - c. Requires the data provided shall meet, at a minimum, all of the following requirements and prohibitions:
 - i. A program participant identified to share must be able to provide their separate and distinct consent to the grant recipient for their provided data to be shared with CDSS for the sole purpose of the evaluation of the grant program.
 - ii. The data provided shall not include any personally identifiable information.
 - iii. The provided data, with the separate and distinct consent of the grant recipient's program's participants, shall not be shared with any other entity or used for any purpose other than those specified in this bill.
 - iv. The data provided shall be subject to all applicable privacy laws.

- v. No other data elements shall be collected that significantly differ from the data elements specified and authorized in this section without prior authorization from the Legislature.
- 26) Requires CDSS to enforce data privacy and protection policies with all grant recipients.
- 27) Allows CDSS, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to establish an appropriate method, process, and structure for grant management, fiscal accountability, payments to grant recipients, and technical assistance and supports for grant recipients that ensures transparency and accountability in the use of state funds. CDSS may, at its discretion, contract with one or more entities, including, but not limited to, community development financial intermediaries, state financial entities, or other community-based organizations, for these purposes.
- 28) Provides that, notwithstanding any other law, and to the extent permitted by federal law, funds utilized by grant recipients to provide guaranteed income payments pursuant to this chapter shall not be considered as income or assets when determining eligibility and benefit amount for any means-tested program, as specified.
- 29) Authorizes, notwithstanding the rulemaking provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act, CDSS, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to implement, interpret, or make specific this bill without taking any regulatory action.
- 30) Requires contracts or grants awarded pursuant to this chapter to be exempt from the personal services contracting requirements mandated by the Government Code.
- 31) Requires contracts or grants awarded pursuant to this chapter to be exempt from the Public Contract Code and the State Contracting Manual and are not subject to the approval of the Department of General Services.
- 32) Makes implementation of the bill subject to an appropriation in the annual Budget Act or another statute for the purposes of this chapter.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) General Fund (GF) cost pressures of an unknown amount, likely in the high tens of millions to low hundreds of millions of dollars, over two years to fund the competitive grants. The exact cost will depend on the number and dollar amount of the grants, which the bill does not specify.
- 2) CDSS estimates GF costs of approximately \$1 million to \$3 million, over three years for consultant costs, and additional costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, for one staff position to implement the program.
- 3) Estimated GF costs to CDE of an unknown amount, likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, for two years to establish performance standards, among other tasks.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Bill:

According to the author, “A strong understanding of the community and regional context, as well as the effective coordination of services and supports aligned with the needs of the community, are essential to achieving better outcomes for children and families at every stage of life – from cradle to career.

“Over the last 10 years, Promise Neighborhoods, Cradle to Career (C2C) networks, and similar entities have worked in disadvantaged communities. Utilizing a place-based, equity-focused approach, these networks coordinate services and supports across the public and private sectors and collect and share data to maximize the efficiency and efficacy of programming. Areas where these networks have operated have seen substantial improvements in healthcare access, literacy, and college and career readiness, as well as reduced child welfare and juvenile justice involvement. To scale these proven cradle- to- career solutions, the state must invest in the “It Takes A Village” strategy by allowing Local Educational Agencies to partner up with these community based networks like Promise Neighborhoods in order to provide community schools with a support network.”

Poverty in California

Poverty impacts the health and well-being of families and, by extension, the neighborhoods and communities in which they live. According to the American Psychological Association, poverty affects children in deep and long-lasting ways both mentally and physically, including being at “greater risk than higher-income children for a range of cognitive, emotional, and health-related problems, including detrimental effects on executive functioning, below average academic achievement, poor social emotional functioning, developmental delays, behavioral problems, asthma, inadequate nutrition, low birth weight, and higher rates of pneumonia.”¹ Poverty not only causes lower academic achievement, but low academic achievement can also lead to poverty. According to the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), “28.7% of adults aged 25–64 without a high school diploma lived in poverty, compared to only 7.6% of college graduates aged 25–64. From 2022 to 2023, poverty rose 2.9 points among less-educated adults, but by under a point for college graduates.”²

In California, poverty rates are measured using the California Poverty Measure, created by PPIC and Stanford Center on Poverty and Equality. The California Poverty Measure showed that poverty has increased back to pre-pandemic levels, rising from 15.2% in 2022 to 16.9% in 2023 (the most recent data available). The report also estimates that 2.7 million more people would have been in poverty if it were not for safety net programs like CalFresh and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Nationally, children are more likely to live in poverty than adults which is why many safety net programs prioritize families with children.

¹ www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status/poverty-hunger-homelessness-children

² Bohn, Sarah, Caroline Danielson, Matt Levin, Marybeth Mattingly, & Christopher Wimer. Poverty in California. August 2025. www.ppic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/

California's Safety Net

According to End Poverty in California, “the safety net’s job is to undo the poverty and disparities wrought by other institutions” by providing financial and programmatic support to folks already experiencing poverty or economic need.³ In California, the safety net includes numerous programs that provide a mix of supports and services including cash grants, nutritional support, housing assistance, and tax credits. These programs include CalFresh, CalWORKs, school lunch programs, the Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program, state and federal Earned Income Tax Credit, the child tax credit, General Assistance, and Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment.

These programs help millions of Californians each year. According to PPIC, the federal Earned Income Tax Credit lowered poverty rates in 2023 by 2.3 points among children and CalFresh prevented 3.7% more children from living in poverty. Additionally, CalWORKs and General Assistance together lowered California’s child poverty rate by 0.9%.⁴

The majority of safety net programs have stringent and unique eligibility criteria and different application and access points, which make programs difficult to navigate and attain for families who need support, especially when compounded with the chronic stress of living in poverty.⁵

Community Schools

Community Schools are an educational model that requires schools to provide services that care for the whole student, not just their educational needs. This includes expanded options for before and after school programs, health and wellness services, and services for the student’s family. The schools provide these services with their own funding and through partnerships with community organizations. According to the State Department of Education, community schools usually include four features:

- Integrated support services;
- Family and community engagement;
- Collaborative leadership and practices for educators and administrators; and
- Extended learning time and opportunities.

This bill acknowledges the alignment in administration and mission of place-based partnerships and community schools.

³ <https://endpovertyinca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/policy-paper.pdf>

⁴ Bohn, Sarah, Caroline Danielson, Matt Levin, Marybeth Mattingly, & Christopher Wimer. Poverty in California. August 2025. www.ppic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/

⁵ Francis, L., DePriest, K., Wilson, M., & Gross, D. Child Poverty, Toxic Stress, and Social Determinants of Health: Screening and Care Coordination. Online journal of issues in nursing, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.3912/OJIN.Vol23No03Man02>

Federal Promise Neighborhoods

Promise Neighborhoods are a holistic, place-based approach to reducing poverty and improving economic, social, and academic outcomes in disadvantaged communities by developing “cradle to career” solutions that support children and families. According to the Lifting Children and Families out of Poverty Task Force, “Promise Neighborhoods tailor their specific set of cradle-to-college-and-career solutions to the local context, but each share the following characteristics: results-driven focus on impacting population-level results; place-based to focus on a specific high-need geography; collective impact is achieved through partnerships; [...] and most importantly, Promise Neighborhoods implement a comprehensive cradle-to-college-and-career continuum that addresses all of a family’s needs to help them move out of poverty.” Additionally, the Task Force noted that the model is community-powered, relies on both public and private investments, and is equity-focused.⁶

The federal government first established the “Promise Neighborhood Initiative” under the Obama Administration to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for youth in poverty. The vision was for all children and youth growing up in Promise Neighborhoods to have access to great schools and strong systems of family and community support to prepare them to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and a career.⁷ The Promise Neighborhood program awarded several cycles of grants in 2010, 2011, and 2012 to nonprofit organizations, Indian tribes, and institutions of higher education. There are Promise Neighborhoods in 20 states and the District of Columbia. Programs awarded funding were required to use a variety of metrics to track outcomes.

Promise Neighborhoods, StriveTogether Networks, and other cradle-to-career networks have created opportunities for children and families living in economically disadvantaged communities across California for over 10 years. These entities have created change such as ensuring pathways for teachers of color, improving kindergarten readiness and student mental health, and provided support in community schools, workforce development, housing support, tax preparation services, and vaccine outreach. Promise Neighborhoods and StriveTogether Networks work locally, in geographically defined areas, to coordinate services provided by public and private sector partners, as well as provide direct services to the public.

Further, current cradle-to-career approaches have achieved impressive results in California. These results include:

- Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood: An average of 91% kindergarten readiness rate for the past six years, and an increase in the number of households that have access to primary care-based medical services from 89% to 97%.
- Corning Everett Freeman Promise Neighborhood: An increase in the number of students grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 who met or exceeded state standards in math from 20% to 24%, and an increase in Corning Union High School District’s graduation rate from 84% to 90%.

⁶ *California Lifting Children and Families Out of Poverty Task Force Report: Recommended Strategies to Address Deep Child Poverty and Child Poverty in California, November 2018.*

⁷ <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html>

- Hayward Promise Neighborhood: A 32% increase in Hayward Unified School District graduates enrolling in or transferring to California State University East Bay, and a decrease of its high school drop-out rate from 22% to 8%.

Notable examples outside of California include the Promise Heights Neighborhood in Baltimore. According to the Urban Institute, “Promise Heights successfully built partnerships with schools, community organizations, and families. These partnerships served as the infrastructure for expanded access to a cradle-to-career pipeline of resources and supports aligned with the goals of the Promise Neighborhoods program. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, the flexibility of grant funding enabled Promise Heights to pivot from its long-term strategy in order to meet urgent needs that arose in the community. Although Promise Heights made a shift toward a partnership-based model and established a childcare center to sustain programming, the initiative faced barriers to sustainability in the final years of the grant.”⁸ This bill gives organizations, schools and current Promise Neighborhoods the opportunity to receive funding that allows them to create sustainable place-based partnerships and achieve similar community benefits.

Related/Prior Legislation:

AB 1321 (Bonta, 2023) was substantially similar to this bill. AB 1321 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2517 (Bonta, 2022) was substantially similar to this bill. AB 2517 was vetoed by Governor Newsom, who cited costs concerns and stated, “Bills with significant fiscal impact, such as this measure, should be considered and accounted for as part of the annual budget process.”

AB 132 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 144, Statutes of 2021) establishes the Cradle-to-Career Data System to link data on student progress through education, workforce training, employment, health and social services; establishes a governing board comprised of 21 members; and establishes the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data within Government Operations Agency until July 1, 2026, among other things.

AB 932 (Levine, 2021) would have established the Cradle-to-Career Grant Program to administer public and private funds to address child poverty and achievement gaps in California children. AB 932 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 686 (Allen, 2019) would have enacted the California Promise Neighborhoods Act of 2019, which would have provided grants, administered by the State Department of Education, to implement a comprehensive integrated continuum of cradle-to-college-to-career solutions, including academic, health, and social programs. AB 686 was set to be heard in the Assembly Education Committee, but the hearing was canceled at the request of the author.

AB 2555 (Calderon, 2014) would have required the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in collaboration with various other state agencies and private organizations, to develop a five-year plan for expanding Cradle-to-Career initiatives in California. AB 2555 was set to be heard in the

⁸ www.urban.org/research/publication/evaluation-promise-heights-promise-neighborhood

Assembly Higher Education Committee, but the hearing was canceled at the request of the author.

COMMENTS

AB 1969 creates a grant program that will help pre-existing community partnerships like Promise Neighborhoods to advance their efforts to fight poverty. Local organizations, public agencies, and educational institutions pull together public and private resources to help their communities. This bill would provide one more funding source and encourage these entities to work together. Partnerships that understand and can address the unique local challenges of a community may be an effective strategy to combat poverty across the state. The impact of currently active Promise Neighborhoods show evidence of that. This bill creates a grant program that allow the state to give incentive grants to partnerships that have shown commitment to addressing the causes and impacts of poverty.

PRIOR VOTES

Assembly Floor:	56 - 14
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 4
Assembly Human Services Committee:	5 - 2

POSITIONS

Support:

Grace INC (Sponsor)
City of Emeryville
City of Oakland
Marin Promise Partnership
Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA)
SBCS

Oppose:

None received

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