
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2301 (Soria) - Community colleges: Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program

Version: February 19, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill requires the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor's Office to establish a Community College Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program that would authorize 10 community college districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Chancellor's Office indicates that there could be one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs for each pilot district to create and implement a Bachelor of Science of Nursing degree program, but these start-up costs could be absorbable within existing resources. These costs would encompass any updates to the design of new nursing academic standards, student learning outcomes, updates to existing curriculum that would be needed to satisfy the program, and implementation of other coursework requirements. The Chancellor's Office estimates these costs could range from \$80,000 to \$138,000 per pilot district but they can be implemented by operating within the current community college Associate Degree in Nursing infrastructure.
- The Chancellor's office estimates one-time General Fund workload costs of up to \$33,000 to develop the application for the pilot program, issue guidance, and provide technical assistance.
- The costs for the Legislative Analyst Office to complete the evaluation is expected to be minor and absorbable within existing resources.

Background: Under existing law, the primary mission of the California State University (CSU) is to offer undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master's degree in the liberal arts and sciences and professional education including teacher education. The CSU is authorized to establish two-year programs only when mutually agreed upon by the Trustees and the CCC Board of Governors. The CSU is also authorized to jointly award the doctoral degree with the University of California (UC) and with one or more independent institutions of higher education.

The UC is authorized to provide undergraduate and graduate instruction and has exclusive jurisdiction in public higher education over graduate instruction in the professions of law, medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine. The UC is also the primary state-supported academic agency for research.

Under existing law, the mission and function of the CCC is the offering of academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCC are authorized to grant the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science degrees. The community colleges are also required to offer learning supports to close learning gaps, English as a Second Language instruction, and adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the postsecondary level.

Proposed Law: This bill requires the Chancellor to develop a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program that authorizes select community college districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

This bill limits the pilot program to 10 community college districts statewide and requires the chancellor to identify eligible community college districts based on specified criteria, including: priority granted to community college districts that are located in underserved nursing areas and community college districts where the service area of the community college district includes communities with persistent poverty.

This bill requires the community college district to retain the associate degree in nursing program and specifies that the total number of participants in a pilot program at a community college district is to be limited to the class size approved by the Board of Registered Nursing. It also provides that the total number of participants in a pilot program is to be limited to 25 percent of that class size, or 35 students, whichever is greater.

This bill allows districts without a nationally accredited nursing program, but that are in “candidate” status, to be provisionally selected to participate in this pilot program and commence the program upon final accreditation, as specified. This bill further requires that priority be given to districts located in the Central Valley and Inland Empire. If a CCC district that is provisionally selected is found to be making untimely progress toward accreditation, after notice and an opportunity to cure, the Chancellor’s Office may withdraw the provisional selection and may select a different CCC district to participate in the pilot program.

This bill requires the Chancellor’s Office to develop a process designed to assist CCC nursing programs applying for national accreditation for the purpose of qualifying for the pilot program, and that assistance be made available to districts upon request.

This bill requires each participating district to give priority registration for enrollment in the pilot program to students with an associate degree in nursing from that CCC district.

This bill requires that the Legislative Analyst’s Office conduct an evaluation of the pilot program to determine the effectiveness of the program and the need to continue or expand the program, as specified. This bill also requires each participating district to submit the information necessary for this evaluation, as determined by the LAO, to the Chancellor’s Office.

This bill exempts a Bachelor of Science in Nursing offered under the pilot program from being subject to the CCC bachelor’s degree approval process outlined in existing law.

The bill’s provisions would sunset on January 1, 2036.

Related Legislation: AB 664 (Alvarez, 2026) authorizes the CCC Chancellor to allow the Southwestern Community College District to offer no more than four workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs. The bill is pending in this committee

AB 2136 (Pacheco, 2026) authorizes the Board of Governors of the CCC to authorize the Cerritos Community College District to offer up to three applied baccalaureate degree programs in the fields of public safety management, paralegal studies, and automotive technology. AB 2136 was held in the Assembly Committee on Higher Education.

AB 2694 (Alvarez, 2026) changes the standard whereby community college districts may offer baccalaureate degree programs, as specified. The bill is pending in this committee.

AB 2104 (Soria, 2024) would have required the Chancellor of the CCC to develop a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Pilot Program that authorizes select CCC districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. AB 2104 was vetoed by the Governor with the following message:

“I support the author’s intent to expand access to baccalaureate nursing degree programs in underserved communities. The 2024 Budget Agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program, which may be used to develop or expand Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) partnerships with higher education institutions. These types of partnerships have proven successful in expanding BSN access for community college students and increasing the number of BSN degree recipients. All segments of higher education should continue to focus on building these programs together, and I am concerned this bill could inadvertently undermine that collaboration.

Additionally, in recent years, both the CCC and the CSU have been provided with expanded authority to offer independent programs. Given these major changes, a pause should be taken to understand their full impact before additional authorities are granted.”

SB 895 (Roth, 2024) would have required the CCC Chancellor’s Office to establish a Community College Bachelor of Science in Nursing Pilot Program that would authorize 10 CCC districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. SB 895 was vetoed by the Governor with the following message:

“I appreciate the author’s commitment to expanding access to baccalaureate nursing degree programs for community college students. The 2024 Budget Agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program, which may be used to develop or expand Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) partnerships with higher education institutions. These types of partnerships have proven successful in expanding BSN access for community college students and increasing the number of BSN degree recipients. All segments of higher education should continue to focus on

building these programs together, and I am concerned this bill could inadvertently undermine that collaboration.

Additionally, in recent years, both the CCC and the CSU have been provided with expanded authority to offer independent programs. Given these major changes, a pause should be taken to understand their full impact before additional authorities are granted.”

Staff Comments: The Chancellor’s Office indicates there could be one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs for each pilot district to create and implement a Bachelor of Science of Nursing degree program. The costs would encompass any updates to the design of new nursing academic standards, student learning outcomes, any updates to existing curriculum that would be needed to satisfy the program, and implement other coursework. However, the Chancellor’s Office indicates that these costs are consistent with recent state budget actions to implement new academic programs and curriculum and could be absorbable. For example, the 2021 State Budget included \$5.6 million for the California Community Colleges to implement the California State University ethnic studies graduation requirement and 115 colleges received an allocation of approximately \$48,000.

The Chancellor’s Office also indicates that the bill’s costs could be lower if the pilot districts can develop a shared BSN curriculum that is consistent with the Bureau of Registered Nursing (BSN) standards. Additionally, because class sizes are limited and based on existing Associate Degree for Nursing (ADN) enrollment, the pilot colleges will not need to hire new faculty for this program and can instead redirect existing nursing faculty to teach the required curriculum (75 percent of nursing students will be enrolled in the ADN program, and 25 percent of nursing students will be enrolled in the BSN).

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