

Date of Hearing: April 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Darshana R. Patel, Chair

AB 2324 (Jeff Gonzalez) – As Amended April 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Vocational education: Youth Caregivers Career Pathway program

SUMMARY: Establishes the Youth Caregivers Career Pathway program for youth enrolled in high school to prepare youth for careers in this field. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the Governor’s Council for Career Education, by July 1, 2027, to assess the challenges and needs of the state’s youth caregivers and recommend workplace learning strategies to the California Workforce Pathways Joint Advisory Committee (CWPJAC) for developing a Youth Caregivers Career Pathway program under the Education, Child Development, and Family Services industry sector as an extension of the Family and Human Services career pathway.
- 2) Requires the CWPJAC, by July 1, 2028, to appoint an advisory group of subject matter experts in the areas of supports and services for older adults and those with developmental, physical, or mental health disabilities, current or former youth caregivers and their families, and others with lived experience as a recipient or provider of care, to create and establish a Youth Caregivers Career Pathway program for the direct support profession under the Education, Child Development, and Family Services industry sector as an extension of the Family and Human Services career pathway.
- 3) Requires the Youth Caregivers Career Pathway program to include all the following:
 - a) A focus on in-home caregiving for youth caregivers supporting household family members;
 - b) A curriculum for youth caregivers caring for a family member in the family member’s home to be eligible for credits for providing that care toward graduation from high school;
 - c) Provision of credits and preparation for direct support professional careers for youth enrolled in grades 9 to 12;
 - d) The necessary training and content for preparation for direct support professional careers that include the principles of Home and Community-Based Services Waivers, and other principles and practices relevant to the care and support of people with developmental, mental health, and physical disabilities, and the needs of older adults;
 - e) The monitoring of family member youth caregivers’ risk factors, such as mental and emotional health, social development, academic and educational attainment, physical health, and other areas impacting the youth caregiver, and the provision of necessary referrals for support services to address identified challenges;
 - f) A work-based learning strategy that considers the family home a viable location for the Youth Caregivers Career Pathway program;

- g) Consultation by the CWPJAC with individuals with lived experience in receiving services for people with developmental, mental health, or physical disabilities, and older adult supports;
- h) Consultation by the CWPJAC in developing the program with potentially applicable state departments such as the State Department of Developmental Services, State Department of Social Services, California Department of Aging, Department of Rehabilitation, California State Independent Living Council, and State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and statewide associations such as the Association of Regional Center Agencies, California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, California Association of Area Agencies on Aging, County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California, and others to access the existing workforce development training and career ladder information in these fields; and
- i) Defines, “youth caregiver” as a child or youth of an age typical of a student in grades 9-12 who provides help or care to a person who has an ongoing health problem or chronic illness, or who is elderly, frail, disabled, or mentally ill.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes the Career Technical Education Incentive Grant (CTEIG) Program as a state education, economic, and workforce development initiative with the goal of providing students in kindergarten through 12th grade with the knowledge and skills necessary to transition to employment and postsecondary education and identifies the purpose of the competitive CTEIG program as the encouragement and maintenance of the delivery of career technical education (CTE) programs. (Education Code (EC) 53070)
- 2) Requires applicants for the CTEIG Program to demonstrate that their CTE programs provide all of the following to meet minimum eligibility standards:
 - a) High-quality curriculum and instruction aligned with the California CTE Model Curriculum Standards, including a coherent sequence of CTE courses that enable students to transition to postsecondary education programs, that lead to a career pathway or attain employment or industry certification upon graduation from high school, including programs that integrate academic and CTE and that offer the opportunity for participants to prepare for postsecondary enrollment and to earn postsecondary credits through Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate courses, or dual enrollment opportunities;
 - b) Career exploration, guidance, and a continuum of work-based learning opportunities aligned with academic coursework, which may include paid internships;
 - c) Student support services, including counseling and leadership development to address students’ social, emotional, career, and academic needs;
 - d) System alignment, coherence, and articulation with postsecondary institutions, allowing for dual enrollment opportunities;

- e) Ongoing and meaningful industry and labor partnerships, evidenced by written agreements and through participation on advisory committees and collaboration with business and labor organizations to provide opportunities for students to gain access to pre-apprenticeships, internships, industry certifications, and work-based learning opportunities, as well as opportunities for industry to provide input to the CTE programs and curriculum;
 - f) Opportunities for students to participate in after-school, extended day, and out-of-school internships, competitions, leadership development opportunities, and other work-based learning opportunities;
 - g) Connection to regional or local labor market demands and a focus on current or emerging high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations, and is informed by the regional plan of the local SWP consortium;
 - h) Pathway to an industry-recognized credential or certificate, or appropriate postsecondary education or training, employment, or a postsecondary degree;
 - i) Staffing by skilled teachers or faculty and the provision of professional development opportunities for any teachers or faculty members supporting students in those programs;
 - j) Opportunities for students with exceptional needs to participate in all programs; and
 - k) Annual data reporting to allow for an evaluation of the program. (EC 53071)
- 3) Authorizes the K-12 component of the Strong Workforce Program (SWP) to create, support, or expand high-quality CTE programs at the K-12 level that are aligned with the workforce development efforts occurring through the SWP, and authorizes, commencing with the 2018-19 fiscal year, and subject to an annual appropriation, \$150 million to be apportioned annually by the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to local consortia. (EC 88827)
- 4) Establishes the California Golden State Pathways Program (GSPP) to provide local educational agencies (LEAs) with the resources to promote pathways in high-wage, high-skill, high-growth areas, including technology, health care, education, and climate-related fields that, among other things, allow students to advance seamlessly from high school to college and career and provide the workforce needed for economic growth. (EC 53020)
- 5) Federal law, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins), provides federal support for CTE programs and focuses on improving the academic and technical achievement of CTE students, strengthening the connections between secondary and postsecondary education, and improving accountability. (Public Law 115-224)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

According to the author “Youth caregivers play a vital yet often unseen role in families and communities. Across the country, young people provide daily care and support for siblings, parents, grandparents, and other loved ones who are aging, ill, or living with disabilities. These responsibilities require maturity, compassion, resilience, and practical problem-solving skills. Despite the value of their contributions, youth caregivers frequently carry these responsibilities without recognition, resources, or structured support. Balancing school, personal development, and caregiving duties can place significant pressure on young people and limit their access to educational and career opportunities. Recognizing youth caregivers means not only acknowledging their work but also ensuring they have pathways that allow their experience to become a strength rather than a barrier. When we invest in programs that connect caregiving experience with education and workforce development, we create meaningful career pathways into fields such as healthcare, community health, and direct care. These pathways honor the skills youth caregivers already possess while equipping them with professional credentials, economic mobility, and long-term career stability. At the same time, strengthening these pathways helps address growing workforce needs in caregiving professions. By valuing lived experience and making entry points more accessible, we can build a workforce that is compassionate, culturally aware, and deeply connected to the communities it serves.”

Workforce shortages in long-term care sector. According to information provided by the author, the network of long-term support and services has experienced decades of workforce shortages which have been exacerbated by the increasing demands from the growth in these populations. Demand for care services is growing, as California’s population ages and people live longer, and as the state invests in early childhood care and education. Home health and personal care aide jobs are among the fastest-growing in California, projected to increase 29% by 2030. (McConville, PPIC, 2024)

The California Department of Developmental Services has experienced an increase in its cases of Early Start and Lanterman individuals from about 280,000 served in 2015 to about 460,000 in 2025, an increase of approximately 60% (LAO, March 2026). The challenges are projected to become increasingly larger in time with the 2024 House Congressional Ways and Means Committee stating, “by 2033, an additional 3.4 million direct care workers will be needed, an increase of 48% from today’s already unmet needs.”

In 2024, researchers from Johns Hopkins University estimated there are about 1.6 million youth caregivers in the U.S. Many youth caregivers struggle with significant challenges in their developing years. Findings show that youth caregivers experience anxiety and depression, and others have reported being resentful and angry at being saddled with caregiving responsibilities and emotions beyond their capacity to understand and manage, as children. One of the most commonly noted struggles for youth caregivers was their inability to complete high school, representing 22% of the students who drop out of high school, making it difficult to go on to either work or college in their adult life. (Bridgeland, 2006)

Defining Career Technical Education. CTE prepares students for the world of work by introducing them to workplace competencies and making academic content accessible to students by providing it in a hands-on context. Along the way, students develop career-relevant, real-world 21st-century skills.

CTE is a program of study that involves a multiyear sequence of courses that integrates core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers. CTE programs in California are organized into 15 industry sectors, covering 58 pathways that identify the knowledge and skills students need. Partnerships are usually developed between high schools, businesses, and postsecondary schools, providing pathways to employment and associate, Bachelor's, and advanced degrees.

Improved outcomes for CTE students. A wide body of research indicates that involvement in CTE coursework provides improved academic outcomes and other benefits to students, with findings. Students with greater exposure to CTE are more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in a two-year college, be employed, and earn higher wages; CTE provides the greatest boost to students who need it most – boys and students from low-income families; and 80% of students taking a college preparatory academic curriculum with rigorous CTE met college and career readiness goals, compared to only 63% of students taking the same academic core who did not experience rigorous CTE.

College and career readiness is a state priority. Each LEA's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) must demonstrate, among other priorities, how the LEA is ensuring that all students are being prepared to be college and career ready through the College and Career Readiness Index which includes data on the number of students completing a CTE pathway, among other measures.

Current CTE standards include a family service career pathway. The California CTE Model Curriculum Standards include 15 industry sectors. Each of these sectors contains multiple career pathways. The *Education, Child Development, and Family Services* industry sector provides students with academic and technical preparation to pursue high-skill, high-demand careers in these related and growing industries. The sector encompasses four distinct, yet interrelated, career pathways: Child Development, Consumer Services, Education, and Family and Human Services.

The Family and Human Services pathway provides students with skills needed for careers related to family and social services. Sample occupations within this pathway include a personal care assistant, among other occupations. ***The Committee may wish to consider*** whether the pathway being proposed by this bill is duplicative of an existing pathway.

The curriculum standards within the Family and Human Services pathway include, among other items:

- D1.1 Describe the ways in which agencies and organizations provide family and human services;
- D4.1 Recognize the local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and agencies established to protect children, adolescents, and adults, including older adults and other persons with special needs and abilities;
- D5.1 Identify the behaviors and resources that foster the health and well-being of individuals and families;
- D5.2 Classify common needs, problems, and adjustments associated with life changes;

- D5.4 Diagram the characteristics and changing needs of the various stages of development throughout the life span;
- D6.4 Plan and demonstrate exercise activities that are enjoyable, safe, and appropriate for the individual needs of clients;
- D6.5 Plan and prepare snacks and meals that meet the dietary needs of persons, including those with special dietary needs, by using sanitary and safe food-handling procedures;
- D9.2 Implement positive guidance techniques that are appropriate for clients and that promote independence;
- D10.1 List the tasks of daily living and the types of assistance persons need with these activities, including assistance for persons with special needs;
- D10.2 Understand the importance of personal care and well-being to the physical and emotional health of clients;
- D10.3 Demonstrate the importance of privacy, independence, dignity, confidentiality, and respect for clients; and
- D11.1 Summarize the signs of emotional and physical abuse, emotional crises, and mental health issues, such as depression, isolation, substance abuse, stress, elder abuse, financial abuse, and neglect.

Student participation in family and human services pathways. The most recent data available from the California Department of Education (CDE) on course enrollment shows a fairly low level of participation in courses in the Family and Human Services pathway within the overall industry sector of Education, Child Development, and Family Services. A total of 2,555 students statewide were enrolled in the intermediate and advanced family and human services courses offered within the pathway at the time this data was reported.

Pathway/course	# schools offering	# courses taught	Female enrollment	Male enrollment	Total enrollment
Industry sector: Education, Child Development & Family Services	613	3,097	23,844	9,912	33,036
Course: Intro to Education, Child Development, and Family Services	316	1,208	6,820	3,180	10,000
Course: Advanced Family & Human Services	21	46	325	164	489
Course: Intermediate Family & Human Services	54	152	1,282	784	2,066

CTE Model Curriculum Standards and Frameworks are being updated. The CDE is currently in the process of updating the CTE Model Curriculum Standards and Framework to bring California into alignment with the Advance CTE National Career Clusters Framework. This framework serves as the foundation for CTE programs in every state and is used for reporting processes at the national level. According to the CDE, this alignment will ensure California's CTE programs remain current, skills-based, and aligned with current workforce needs.

The newly named Health and Human Services career cluster is in Phase III of the updating process. The relevant survey soliciting public comment is open until May 2026. The Phase III career clusters are proposed to be submitted for approval by the State Board of Education (SBE) in November 2027. ***The Committee may wish to consider*** whether the author and relevant stakeholders could participate in opportunities for public input through this curriculum updating process, rather than requiring a statutory change to create a new career pathway.

Arguments in support. According to the Association of Regional Center Agencies, “AB 2324 intends to address two related challenges in disability and aging communities. First, the significant direct support professional’s workforce shortage, worsened by the limited awareness of the profession and the care economy. Second, this bill will address the negative impact on youth caregiver family members by requiring the program to monitor the family member youth caregivers’ risk factors, such as mental and emotional health, social development, academic and educational attainment, physical health, and other areas impacting the youth caregiver, and provide necessary referrals for support services to address identified challenges.

AB 2324 requires the Governor’s Council for Career Education (GCCE) to assess the challenges and needs of the state’s youth caregivers. It then directs the GCCE to recommend workforce learning strategies to the California Workforce Pathway Joint Advisory Committee (CWPJAC) for developing a Youth Caregivers Career Pathway program for the direct support profession. To ensure the effort is fully informed of the priorities and principles and competencies of home and community-based services, AB 2324 requires the CWPJAC to appoint subject matter experts in developmental services, mental health and physical disabilities, and the needs of older adults, to create and establish the Youth Caregivers Career Pathway program.”

Committee Staff recommends the bill be amended as follows:

- 1) Remove references to the creation of a program related to Youth Caregivers.
- 2) Remove the requirement that the Governor’s Council for Career Education assess and provide recommendations to the CWPJAC on the establishment of a Youth Caregivers Pathway program.
- 3) Remove references to the development of a curriculum and require the CDE, with relevant stakeholders to provide guidance on the implementation of the Personal Care and Services career pathway, with elements as specified.
- 4) Require that the Health and Human Services Steering Design Committee consider adding content on the role of youth caregivers within the Personal Care and Services career pathway the next time the CTE Model Curriculum Standards are updated.
- 5) Remove the list of agencies and organizations to be consulted and replace with relevant departments, agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

Related legislation. AB 1590 (Ransom) of the 2025-26 Session requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to determine, in consultation with the executive director of the SBE, a revised allocation formula for the CTEIG that ensures that all funds appropriated for the program in any given fiscal year are fully allocated to program applicants in that fiscal year.

AB 1694 (Carrillo) of the 2025-26 Session would, for purposes of the CTEIG program, delete the prohibition against an applicant being awarded more than the amount determined by the allocation formula; require that an applicant receiving a grant receive a renewal grant for three additional years; and require, beginning with the 2027-28 fiscal year, that up to 90% of the grants be for renewal grants and up to 10% for new grants.

AB 401 (Muratsuchi) of the 2025-26 Session would have required CTEIG program recipients to be granted renewal grants for a total of four years, subject to specified conditions; required the SPI to designate 90% of the CTEIG funds for renewal grants and 10% for new applicants; added a cost-of-living adjustment to the CTEIG appropriation; and removed a limitation on grant awards above a specified level. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 612 (Valladares) of the 2025-26 Session would have required, subject to an appropriation, a one-semester course in CTE as a graduation requirement beginning with students graduating in the 2031-32 school year and require LEAs serving students in grades 9 to 12 to offer at least one course in CTE at all of its high schools. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 845 (Pérez) of the 2025-26 Session requires the CDE to coordinate the updating of CTE model curriculum standards and framework at least every 5 years, convene CTE industry advisory groups for each CTE subject area including specified representatives, to provide input to the updating of the standards and frameworks, identify various work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, as well as outlining the responsibilities of the LEA in sponsoring work-based learning.

SB 721 (Dahle) of the 2025-26 Session would include participation in CTE enhancement, as defined, as an excused absence. This bill was held in the Senate Education Committee.

AB 1929 (McKinnor) Chapter 145, Statutes of 2024, requires that LEAs receiving specified CTE state grants and the California Community College Chancellor's Office to disaggregate program and performance accountability outcome data by race and gender.

AB 3131 (McCarty) Chapter 434, Statutes of 2024, requires that LEAs receiving Equity Multiplier funding through the local control funding formula (LCFF) be given positive consideration for the K-12 SWP.

AB 377 (Muratsuchi) of the 2023-24 Session, would have required the consolidation of specified K-12 CTE programs, increased ongoing funding for the CTEIG, administered by the CDE, to \$450 million per year; requires specified CTE staffing at the state and regional level to support local CTE programs and pathways; and deletes authorization for the K-12 SWP administered by the CCCCO. Also, requires the CDE to establish a stakeholder workgroup to consider improvements to the CTEIG program.

AB 181 (Committee on Budget) Chapter 52, Statutes of 2022, appropriates \$500 million in one-time Proposition 98 funding for the Golden State Pathways Program to support the development and implementation of college and career educational pathways in critically needed sectors of the economy. Authorizes the CDE to contract with up to 10 LEAs for the provision of technical assistance to LEAs, applicants, and grant recipients.

AB 130 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 44, Statutes of 2021, provides that, for the 2021–22 fiscal year and each fiscal year thereafter, \$300 million would be made available to the CDE, upon appropriation for the CTEIG program. Also makes adjustments to program provisions relating to eligibility requirements for grant applicants, and for ensuring compliance with program requirements.

AB 1808 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 32, Statutes of 2018, appropriates in the 2018–19 fiscal year and each fiscal year thereafter, \$150 million to the CTEIG program administered through CDE. Also establishes a K–12 component of the SWP to create, support, or expand high-quality CTE programs at the K–12 level aligned with the workforce development efforts and, commencing with the 2018–19 fiscal year, requires the CCCCO to allocate \$150 million for this program to regional CTE consortia.

AB 104 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 13, Statutes of 2015, establishes the CTEIG, a competitive grant program administered by the CDE, to provide support for career technical education in grades K-12, and provides \$400 million in 2015-16, \$300 million in 2016-17, and \$200 million in 2017-18 for this program.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alzheimer's Greater Los Angeles
Alzheimer's Orange County
Alzheimer's San Diego
Association of Regional Center Agencies
California Association of Public Authorities for IHSS
California Coalition on Family Caregiving
California Disability Services Association
California Foundation for Independent Living Centers
The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration
The California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions

Opposition

None on file

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