

SENATE THIRD READING

SB 271 (Reyes)

As Amended September 9, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires each California State University (CSU) and California Community College (CCC) and requests each University of California (UC) financial aid office, childcare development center, and Basic Needs Center to refer their respective students with dependent children to local resource and referral agencies for purposes of connecting and informing students of existing childcare services and resources.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires each CCC and CSU and requests each UC financial aid office to provide all of the following to students with dependent children:
 - a) Information on the campus' childcare development center and childcare offerings, if applicable;
 - b) Referral to the campus Basic Needs Centers for support accessing information, including but not limited to, information and connections to local resource and referral agencies in order to obtain support in applying for state and federal childcare subsidies and programs and finding local childcare providers; and,
 - c) Information on any supplemental awards, such as the awards for those students with dependent children, as specified.
- 2) Requires each CCC and CSU, and requests each UC child development center or preschool established pursuant to state law for higher education institutions, to provide students with dependent children seeking childcare with both of the following:
 - a) Referral to the campus Basic Needs Center for support accessing information, including but not limited to, information and connections to local resource and referral agencies in order to obtain support in applying for state and federal childcare subsidies and programs and finding local childcare providers; and,
 - b) Referral to the campus' financial aid office, including information on the awards for students with dependent children.
- 3) Expands the definition of basic needs services and resources that a basic needs coordinator and Basic Needs Center on a CCC, CSU, or UC campus is to be responsible for, to include childcare services and resources. These resources may include direct financial or service support. Specifies that if a campus has an existing center or office that supports parenting students and a student may be better served there, the basic needs center is authorized to direct that student to that center or office.
- 4) Adds supplemental awards for students with dependent children as a reason a Basic Needs Center on a CCC, CSU, or UC campus refers a student to the financial aid department or office.

- 5) Expands the definition of childcare services and resources, as it relates to basic needs services, resources, and centers to include, but is not limited to, providing information on affordable childcare options on or near the campus, and information and connections to local resource and referral agencies in order to obtain support in applying to state and federal childcare subsidies and programs, and finding local childcare providers, including but not limited to, the California State preschool program, Head Start, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) childcare program, and general child care and development programs. Childcare services and resources may also include direct financial or service support.
- 6) *Incorporates chaptering out amendments to align with additional changes proposed by AB 148 and SB 148 [which is the Higher Education Budget Trailer Bill] to be operative only if this measure and either AB 148 or SB 148 are enacted and this measure is enacted last.*

COMMENTS

How many? According to California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy, California is home to approximately 400,000 student parents, a majority of whom are first-generation and students of color. Unlike their non-parenting peers, student parents have additional childcare expenses, which are not accounted for in the college's estimate of a student parent's COA. Federal regulations allow financial aid administrators to adjust a student's COA to include the expenses incurred for dependent care, however, institutions often do not take full advantage of this federal flexibility.

On-going efforts to assist students with dependents. Student parents attending a campus of the State's public higher education institutions have access to various resources and services designed to support their needs, including child care programs. Systemwide at the CCC, of the 72 brick and mortar community college districts, 20 operate 42 child care centers. Systemwide, of the 23 campuses of the CSU, 20 have childcare centers, and all of the nine undergraduate campuses of the UCs have child care centers.

However, enrollment capacity varies. Consistently, centers have waitlists for parents seeking to enroll their children. As it relates to financial aid, eligible student parents at any of the three public systems of higher education can receive a supplemental award, up to \$6,000, on top of their Cal Grant award. Additionally, on-campus basic needs centers established to address basic needs insecurity among college students, assist any student with basic needs services and resources, including childcare, food, and housing assistance.

In addition to the campus based resources for students with dependents, resource and referral programs, funded by the California Department of Social Services, Child Care and Development Division, help families find child care that best meets their needs, recruit and train child care providers, and collect data from parents and child care providers. Resource and referral programs provide information to all parents and the community about the availability of child care in their area. Said programs assist potential providers in the licensing process, provide direct services, including training, and coordinate community resources for the benefit of parents and local child care providers. Every county in California is served by at least one resource and referral agency.

As noted above, a variety of services and resources are available to students with dependents, but often times, student parents are not aware of the various resources and services they could benefit from. In fact, according to a 2024 policy brief by Early Edge California, entitled,

Supporting Student Parents and their Young Children in California's Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), the academic success of student parents enrolled in higher education and the well-being of their young children are heavily influenced by the level of institutional support available to them. The policy brief found that the availability or lack of child care options and resources on campus impacts families raising infants and toddlers - who are going through their most critical period of development.

Additionally, the policy brief indicated that by identifying the diverse needs and addressing unique challenges faced by students with dependents, IHEs can foster the educational success, economic mobility, and well-being of both parents and young children in a two-generational approach.

This measure appears to improve communication among campus locations that offer benefits or support the needs of student parents. Further, this measure seeks to ensure student parents are aware of State-funded services designed to help any parent find child care in their area.

According to the Author

According to the author, "there are more than 400,000 student parents in California, an estimated 32% of which have a child under the age of three. Currently, the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC) systems, are required to have Basic Need Centers and coordinators to provide 'basic needs services and resources' to students on campus. This includes, but is not limited to, housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, childcare, and mental health services and resources."

The author states that, "in recent years, California has made strides to support the growing number of student parents, recognizing the additional barriers they face to accessing and completing postsecondary education. However, significant challenges remain. Access to and knowledge of resources is persistently a challenge. Many student parents seeking support at various offices on campus are not informed of the full scope of services they are eligible for."

Further, the author contends that, "SB 271 requires that when a student parent on a higher education campus is identified at one of the following campus locations: a financial aid office, a child development center, or a basic need center, the student parent shall be notified about the childcare and financial aid resources available to them. The bill also ensures student parents are connected to childcare support services provided in their county. This type of direct notification process is needed because student parents are hindered by the communications silos within higher education campuses."

Lastly, according to the author, "while juggling the demands of parents and earning their degrees, student parents should not be further delayed by communication gaps on their campuses. SB 271 bridges gaps, ensuring student parents are connected to the resources they need rather than being left in the dark about relevant services. This bill is a step towards making all student parents feel welcomed, supported, and cared for by fostering an environment where their needs are intentionally met."

Arguments in Support

According to the Western Center on Law & Poverty, "unfortunately, students are not always aware of the resources available to them as illustrated in a report by Early Edge which found that a lack of information on childcare resources and financial aid was a major contributor to student parents not continuing their education. By supporting student parents, we are supporting two

generations at a time which will lead to healthy outcomes for the parents, children and our communities."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs of unknown, but potentially significant amount, possibly in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars for the CCCs, collectively statewide, to update policies and procedures for Basic Needs Centers and Financial Aid Offices. If each college spends between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to comply with the requirements of this bill, then total costs statewide would be between \$116,000 and \$232,000. However, since this bill codifies what is already common practice at many campuses, costs may be lower.
- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to each campus of the CSU and UC to provide training, if needed, to basic needs, financial aid office, and childcare center staff and provide the appropriation information to student parents.

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNERney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Reyes

ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 10-0-0

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

ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 7-0-0

YES: Lee, Castillo, Calderon, Elhawary, Jackson, Celeste Rodriguez, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Sanchez, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Ahrens, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

VERSION: September 9, 2025

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