

Date of Hearing: July 16, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 437 (Weber Pierson) – As Amended June 26, 2025

Policy Committee:	Higher Education	Vote:	7 - 3
	Judiciary		9 - 3

Urgency: No      State Mandated Local Program: No      Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill authorizes up to \$6 million dollars of an appropriation provided in the Budget Act of 2024 to fund the California State University (CSU) to conduct research in furtherance of the recommendations of the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States (Task Force) specifically with regard to determining options for how to confirm an individual's descendant status and verification of eligibility for reparative claims.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

The Budget Act of 2024 allows the Director of the Department of Finance to augment one more items by no more than \$12 million from the General fund for implementation of reparations legislation enacted into law, \$6 million of which this bill authorizes for its purposes.

The CSU indicates that the \$6 million appropriated by this bill should be sufficient to cover the costs for participating campuses.

**COMMENTS:**

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Senate Bill 437 would require the California State University to independently research and report on scientific methodologies for determining an individual's genealogical fingerprint to verify their status as a descendant of an enslaved person in the United States. This bill is essential for the successful implementation of the California Reparations Task Force's final recommendations.

2) **Background. Task Force.** In 2020, the Legislature established the first-in-the-nation Task Force to determine options and develop recommendations for the provision of reparations to Black individuals, particularly those descending from enslaved persons. The Task Force submitted its final 1080-page report to the Legislature on June 29, 2023, which summarized the harms caused by slavery and the ways in which the institution of slavery continues to have negative impacts on the descendants of enslaved person in the United States. The report makes several recommendations for appropriate remedies for the Legislature to consider including how any form of compensation for persons descended from enslaved persons

should be calculated and that only an individual able to demonstrate they are descended from either an enslaved African American in the United States or a free African American living in the United States before 1900 should be eligible for monetary reparations. However, the Task Force did not make a definitive recommendation on which entity should verify an individual's claim for eligibility, other than recommending that the State of California should take this responsibility. Therefore, while the Task Force did recommend the provision of monetary reparations, among other things, for descendants of African American enslaved persons, there is still not a clear path forward for how a claimant of such reparations would demonstrate eligibility. This bill tasks the CSU with exploring options for determining how to confirm an individual's status as a descendant of an enslaved person.

***Existing CSU Work to Advance Black Student Achievement.*** The CSU is the nation's largest and most diverse public university system. The CSU also houses the Central Office for the Advancement of Black Student Success at Sacramento State, focused on addressing the barriers to Black student success. Similarly CSU Dominguez Hills is home to the Mervyn Dymally African American Political and Economic Institute. The Dymally Institute dedicates itself to exploring and documenting the professional lives and achievements of Black leaders and examines the impact of their public policy efforts on the political and economic development of Black individuals and other disadvantaged communities.

According to the CSU:

If SB 437 were signed into law, the CSU will work with state partners to conduct a systemwide request for proposal process to all our universities who would be interested in leading this project. Through our initial conversations, several universities have already expressed preliminary interest and demonstrated expertise in the fields of study essential in conducting this work, including—but not limited to—anthropology, history and genealogical research, among others.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 7 (Bryan) of the current legislative session, permits the CSU, the University of California, independent institutions of higher education, and private postsecondary educational institutions, to consider providing a preference in admissions to an applicant who is a descendant of slavery. The bill is currently awaiting hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

SB 518 (Weber Pierson) of the current legislative session, establishes the Bureau for Descendants of American Slavery within state government, and establishes the Bureau's duties relating to determining an individual's status as a descendant, as defined, and to reviewing and investigating complaints of property taken as a result of racially motivated eminent domain. The bill is currently awaiting a hearing by this committee.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Aaron Heredia / APPR. / (916) 319-2081