
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 437
Author: Weber Pierson (D), et al.
Amended: 9/4/25 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 5-2, 3/26/25

AYES: Pérez, Cabaldon, Cortese, Gonzalez, Laird

NOES: Ochoa Bogh, Choi

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 11-2, 4/22/25

AYES: Umberg, Allen, Arreguín, Ashby, Caballero, Durazo, Laird, Stern, Wahab,
Weber Pierson, Wiener

NOES: Niello, Valladares

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 5-1, 5/23/25

AYES: Caballero, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

NOES: Seyarto

NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

SENATE FLOOR: 28-10, 6/2/25

AYES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon,
Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Laird, Limón,
McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-
Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NOES: Alvarado-Gil, Choi, Dahle, Grove, Jones, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Seyarto,
Strickland, Valladares

NO VOTE RECORDED: Hurtado, Reyes

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 61-17, 9/8/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: California State University: claim eligibility: genealogy and
descendancy

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill authorizes up to \$6 million of funds appropriated in the 2025 Budget Act for purposes of enabling the California State University (CSU) to explore options to determine how to confirm an individual's status as a descendant of an enslaved person. It also requires that the CSU annually submit a report to the Legislature and Governor on pending and completed research projects along with a final report that includes recommendations for statewide implementation.

Assembly Amendments of 9/4/25 define descendant of an enslaved person, establish a deadline for CSU research, and update funding source.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the CSU, under the administration of the Trustees of the CSU, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in the state. (Education Code (EC) § 66600)
- 2) Requires that the CSU's Statewide Central Office for Advancement of Black Excellence, housed at Sacramento State, manage the state's California Black-Serving Institutions program designation. (EC § 66076.3)
- 3) Authorizes the Trustees to establish an African American Political and Economic Institute at CSU, Dominguez Hills and requires CSU, Dominguez Hills to rename the institute the Mervyn M. Dymally African American Political and Economic Institute.
- 4) Establishes, until July 1, 2023, 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).
- 5) Requires the Task Force, among other things, to identify, compile, and synthesize the relevant corpus of evidentiary documentation of the institution of slavery that existed within the United States and the colonies, as specified, and to recommend the form of compensation that should be awarded, the instrumentalities through which it should be awarded, and who should be eligible for this compensation.
- 6) States that the State of California recognizes and accepts responsibility for all of the harms committed by the state in connection with chattel slavery and its

enduring legacy, issues an apology from the State of California for perpetuating the harms African Americans face through state and private action, and requires a plaque memorializing the apology to be installed in the State Capitol. (Government Code § 8301.2)

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes up to \$6 million of funds appropriated pursuant to the 2025 Budget Act for purposes of enabling CSU to conduct research in furtherance of the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans (Task Force) recommendations, and it authorizes CSU to partner with other universities or nonprofit institutions for the purpose of conducting that research.
- 2) Requires the CSU to explore options for confirming an individual's descendant status, establish a process for conducting or verifying genealogical research for purposes of confirming an individual's status as a descendant of an enslaved person for eligibility for reparative claims by the 2029-30 academic year, and commence that work by the 2026–27 academic year. It also authorizes funds to support student participation in support of this goal.
- 3) Requires, prior to the start of each fiscal year, the CSU consultant with the California Legislative Black Caucus to propose research components to be addressed through the specified appropriation and each year until funding is exhausted.
- 4) Requires CSU, by October 1 of each year and until funding is exhausted, to submit to the Legislature and Governor a report with a status update of pending research projects and research projects that have been completed within the prior year.
- 5) Requires CSU to submit a final report that includes its research findings, recommendations with options, and timelines for statewide implementation, including costs, developed according to the bill's provisions.
- 6) Defines for purposes of the bill the term, "descendant of an enslaved person" to mean an individual who can establish direct lineage to a person who before 1900, was subjected to American chattel slavery and meets at least one of the following:

- a) Was emancipated through legal or extralegal means, including self-purchase, manumission, legislative action, military service, or judicial ruling.
- b) Obtained freedom through gradual abolition statutes or constitutional amendments.
- c) Was classified as a fugitive from bondage under federal or state law.
- d) Was deemed contraband by military authorities.
- e) Rendered military or civic service while subject to legal restrictions based on ancestry historically associated with slavery

Comments

Need for this bill. According to the author, “Senate Bill (SB) 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. To establish eligibility for the recommendations outlined by the Task Force, we must first have a clear and accurate method to identify descendants of American chattel slavery. Many African Americans face significant challenges in tracing their lineage due to incomplete records, forced family separations, and the systemic erasure of their histories. By tasking California State University with determining the best methods for establishing lineage, this bill would provide Black Californians with access to reliable, state-supported genealogical research that might otherwise be costly or difficult to obtain.”

Task Force. The Legislature enacted AB 3121 (Weber, Chapter 319, Statutes of 2020), establishing the first-in-the-nation Task Force to investigate options for providing reparations to African Americans, and particularly the descendants of enslaved persons in recognition of California’s role in accommodating and facilitating slavery and the continuation of racist institutions post-abolition. AB 3121 also required the Task Force to recommend appropriate ways to educate the public of its findings, recommend appropriate remedies, and submit a report of its work. The Task Force submitted its final 74-page report to the Legislature on June

29, 2023. The final report summarizes the harms caused by slavery and the lingering negative effects of the institution of slavery on descendants of persons enslaved in the US and, more broadly, on living African Americans and on society in California. The report includes Task Force recommendations for reparations, taking into account: 1) how any form of compensation to African Americans, with a special consideration for African Americans who are descendants of persons enslaved in the US, should be calculated; 2) what form of compensation should be awarded, though what instrumentalities, and who should be eligible for such compensation; and 3) whether any other forms of rehabilitation or restitution to African descendants are warranted and what form and scope those measures should take.

CSU responsible for research, recommendations and annual reporting. This bill seeks to advance Task Force recommendations by identifying CSU as the entity to investigate and develop ways to confirm an individual's descendant status. Specifically, it requires CSU to establish a framework for conducting genealogical research that can be used to verify eligibility for reparative claims. The money allocated by this measure is to support CSU in achieving these research objectives and developing recommendations based on that research. The CSU must annually consult with the California Legislative Black Caucus on research components and annually report to the Legislature and Governor until the funding is exhausted. This is in addition to providing a final report including its findings and recommendations for statewide implementation.

Why CSU? The CSU system consists of 23 universities and roughly 28,000 fulltime and part-time faculty. It is the nation's largest and most diverse public university system. As reported by the CSU, it educates the most ethnically, economically, and academically diverse student bodies in the country. The CSU also houses the Central Office for the Advancement of Black Student Success at Sacramento State, which is focused on addressing the barriers to Black student success and the Mervyn Dymally African American Political and Economic Institute at CSU, Dominguez Hills. The institute dedicates itself to exploring and documenting the professional lives and achievements of African American leaders and examines the impact of their public policy efforts on the political and economic development of African Americans and other disadvantaged communities. These centers demonstrate CSU's commitment to the African American and Black community. Lastly, CSU promotes its capacity to utilize classroom based knowledge for problem-solving through applied research to address state's needs. Having CSU conduct research and develop applicable solutions seems to fall within its scope of practice. Presumably, all of these factors

are likely to have influenced the decision to select CSU for implementing the provisions in this measure. This bill additionally allows CSU to collaborate with other universities or nonprofit institutions in conducting its research.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: Yes Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee analysis, this bill would have the following fiscal impact:

- 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/8/25)

None received

OPPOSITION: (Verified 6/8/25)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 61-17, 9/8/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: Castillo, Chen, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Gallagher, Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hoover, Lackey, Macedo, Patterson, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa, Wallis

NO VOTE RECORDED: Flora, Nguyen

Prepared by: Olgalilia Ramirez / ED. / (916) 651-4105
9/8/25 19:42:26

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