

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 632 (Arreguín) – As Amended June 10, 2026

Policy Committee: Higher Education

Vote: 9 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill expands eligibility for a fee waiver provided under the California College Promise Program to part-time students enrolled in at least nine semester units. The bill also prohibits, as a condition of receipt of program funds, participating California Community Colleges (CCCs) and Districts (CCDs) from referring to any other student financial aid program as the California College Promise.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressures of an unknown, but potentially significant amount, possibly in the millions of dollars for the CCCs, collectively statewide, to provide fee waivers to part-time students under the California College Promise Program.
- 2) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs in the tens of thousands of dollars for the CCCs, collectively statewide, to develop and provide information to students regarding the benefits of full-time enrollment.

COMMENTS:

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

I am proud to lead the fight to expand the California College Promise Program to help our neediest students by expanding the ability of our community colleges to waive the fees for part-time students for two years. Existing law requires that a student be full-time in order to receive a fee waiver through the Program, which erroneously locks out our least advantaged students and perpetuates inequity and inequality at our community colleges.

- 2) **Background. *California College Promise Program.*** Established in 2017, the California College Promise Program authorizes CCCs to waive fees for the first two years of college for first-time or returning full-time students regardless of financial need. To qualify, a student must have no prior postsecondary coursework or have taken one or more semesters off from college coursework, enroll full-time (defined as 12 or more units per semester), and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or California Dream Act Application. Under the program, CCCs may also use the California College Promise Program funds for a variety of other purposes, such as strengthening student support services, or providing grants to help

students cover the costs of child care, transportation, books or other expenses. The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) estimates that CCCs spent 75% of the total \$375 million allocated by the Legislature for the program between fiscal years 2018-19 and 2022-23 on direct student aid. According to the CCC Chancellor's Office, in any given year approximately 61% to 65% of over 1.9 million total CCC students enrolled are part-time students.

This bill allows a CCC to provide a fee waiver under the California College Promise Program to part-time students enrolled in at least nine semester units.

California College Promise Grant Fee Waiver. Enrollment fees at CCCs are the lowest in the country (\$46 per unit), and almost half of all CCC students (over one million) receive a fee waiver. Until recently, the CCCs referred to a fee waiver as a Board of Governor's (BOG) fee waiver. The BOG fee waiver has existed since the establishment of enrollment fees at the CCC in 1984 and waives the per unit enrollment fee for any CCC student (part-time or full-time) who demonstrates financial need, without limit on the number of years a student may be eligible.

The California College Promise Grant replaced the BOG fee waiver. Additionally, current law requires CCCs to provide fee waivers for surviving dependents of certain military service members and first responders.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 537 (Ahrens), of the current legislative session, is substantially similar to this bill but with no minimum unit enrollment requirement for eligibility. AB 537 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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