

SENATE THIRD READING

SB 761 (Ashby)

As Amended July 17, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Expands the definition of a state-approved local educational program that increases employability (LPIE) to include any program offered by a California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU), or University of California (UC); and, establishes a data-sharing and consent requirement for the sharing of student information from the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for CalFresh outreach to students.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires the CSAC by January 1, 2027, to update the Grant Delivery System to enable:
 - a) CSAC to identify students that might be eligible for CalFresh; and,
 - b) Students, who have been identified as being potentially eligible for CalFresh, to provide informed and meaningful consent for the sharing of their personal information with the CDSS, the appropriate county human service agency, and the appropriate public higher education institution. The personal student information shared is prohibited from being used for any other purpose other than identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources including conducting direct outreach on CalFresh.
- 2) Permits CSAC to provide student's personal information, of the students who have provided meaningful and informed consent to CDSS as defined by a data sharing agreement.
- 3) Defines student contact information to be limited to the student's legal name, email address, zip code or county of residence, and telephone number of the student.
- 4) Requires if the Cal Grant Reform Act is initiated for the grant delivery system to be updated to accomplish the requirements of (1) and for CSAC to provide CDSS, the appropriate county human service agency, and the appropriate public higher education institution with specified student information pursuant to the terms a data sharing agreement. The appropriate county human service agency and public higher education institution is the one where the student is enrolled for college or university.
- 5) Repeals Section 18901.12 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.
- 6) Authorizes, to the extent permitted by federal law, any campus-based program of study at a public higher education institution to be considered a LPIE for CalFresh eligibility, if the program has employment and training components similar to those listed in federal regulations.
- 7) Requires the Chancellor's Office of the CCC and the Chancellor's Office of the CSU, and requests the Office of the President of the UC to submit to CDSS a list of campus-based

programs of study and for CDSS to approve the programs as qualifying for LPIE for purposes of CalFresh eligibility.

- 8) Authorizes any campus-based program, not on the original list submitted by the public higher education institutions, to submit a certification application to CDSS for approval as an LPIE. If the program has employment and training components similar to those listed in federal regulations, CDSS is required to approve the program.
- 9) Clarifies that the Chancellor's Office of the CCC, the Chancellor's Office of the CSU, and the Office of the President of the UC are not required to resubmit programs that have already been approved as LPIE programs on campus.
- 10) Requires CDSS, by September 1, 2026, and annually thereafter until 2030, to submit a report to the Assembly Committee on Higher Education, the Assembly Committee on Human Services, the Senate Committee on Education, and the Senate Committee on Human Services, containing the following data points:
 - a) The number of state approved campus-based LPIE programs, disaggregated by name and campus;
 - b) The number of pending applications, disaggregated by name and campus;
 - c) The number of applications denied, including the reason for the denial, disaggregated by name and campus;
- 11) Requires CDSS to post the aforementioned report on the department's website.
- 12) Authorizes CDSS to implement the approval of LPIE programs through all-county letters or similar instruction that have the same enforcement authority as regulations and requires CDSS to issue a guidance letter on how to submit programs for approval as LPIE to the Chancellor's Office of the CCC, the Chancellor's Office of the CSU, and the Office of the President of the UC by May 31, 2026.
- 13) Requires CSAC and CDSS to enter into a data-sharing agreement by which CSAC will share student information with CDSS so that CDSS can share the student's information with the systemwide office of the postsecondary education campus where the student is enrolled. Authorizes CDSS to share the student's information for the purpose of identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources including conducting direct outreach on CalFresh.
- 14) Requires, if a data sharing agreement is in place, beginning in the 2027-2028 academic year, the appropriate county human service agency, counties and the appropriate systemwide office of the postsecondary education campus where the student is enrolled, to contact all students, who have opted to have their personal information shared with CDSS, for the purpose of identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources including conducting direct outreach on CalFresh.
 - a) Prohibits the data shared with the entity as described above to be used for any other purpose other than identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources including conducting direct outreach on CalFresh.

- 15) Establishes, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this bill contains costs mandated by the state, the state shall reimburse the applicable entities.

COMMENTS

CalFresh Eligibility Notifications to College Students. Since the Coronavirus pandemic, a myriad of efforts have been made both at the federal and state level to increase student participation in CalFresh. As part of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) Simplification Act of 2021, Congress authorized State financial aid agencies and institutions of higher education to use student information from the FASFA for targeted CalFresh outreach. In July 2024, the Federal Student Aid Office within the U.S. Department of Education issued a "Dear Colleague Letter" providing guidance for how higher education institutions and state financial aid agencies are to utilize FASFA data to help orchestrate outreach to students on their potential eligibility for social services.

In response to both Federal and State efforts to establish data sharing agreements for the purpose of enhancing participation in CalFresh, the CCC Chancellor's Office has been working with CDSS to develop a new state-level data sharing agreement to improve the administration of CalFresh benefits. Additionally, two community colleges have executed data sharing agreements with their county human service agency to improve the administration of public benefits to students.

This measure would enhance those efforts by permitting student personal information to be shared with CDSS and subsequently the county human service agencies, and systemwide offices of the CCC, CSU, and UC for the purpose of identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off- campus basic needs services and resources including CalFresh.

Local program that increases employability (LPIE). In addition to providing a method for data sharing, this measure also establishes a streamlined pathway for educational programs at the CCC, CSU, and UC to become approved LPIE programs; thereby, providing students the ability to receive CalFresh.

CDSS's All County Letter No 22-46 from June 2022, explains LPIEs are a program that is either operated by a state or local government where one or more components of the program are equivalent to employment and training components as specified in federal regulations. Employment and training components include adult basic education, career and technical education, English language acquisition, work readiness training, and work experience. CDSS ultimately has the authority to determine if a program qualifies as an LPIE.

Prior to the passing of AB 396 (Gabriel), Chapter 461, Statutes of 2021, the "approval" process for campus-based LPIE included having county human services agencies and/or colleges and universities submit programs to CDSS for approval. With the passing of AB 396 (Gabriel) a uniformed procedure was introduced with the CCC, CSU, and UC submitting campus-based LPIE for approval.

The CCC, CSU, and UC all identified two general programs that would qualify as LPIE: Campus Employment Programs and Research and Teaching Assistantships. Campus Employment Programs are educational programs where the student is employed by the campus or in an auxiliary organization and the Research and Teaching Assistantships are programs where a student is hired for as a research or teaching assistant. Additionally as required by AB 396

(Gabriel), CDSS provided a letter to the public higher education institutions providing a guide for how college's campuses could increase CalFresh participation through the identification of LPIE. The letter included detailed descriptions of how educational programs could meet the educational and training components to qualify as LPIE. As of June 30, 2025, CDSS has approved 9,391 CCC programs, 2,472 CSU programs, and 1,507 UC programs as LPIE for CalFresh eligibility.

The Author states it is her intention to have every two year and four year program offered at public higher education institution qualify as a LPIE. Similar legislation has been codified by other states. Massachusetts currently recognizes all community college programs as LPIE for purposes of SNAP benefits and Oregon recognizes all two year and four year programs if the student is enrolled to receive training and skills for employment. The measure contains similar language by identifying all programs offered by the CCC, CSU, and UC as being LPIE if approved by CDSS. The measure has the CCC, CSU, and UC providing the list to the department and the department approving the programs.

According to the Author

As articulated by the Author, "many college students, especially those from low income backgrounds are unable to access fresh meals. Half of California's college students experience food insecurity. Students are eligible for CalFresh, but fewer than 25% actually receive benefits. SB 761 addresses food access by streamlining CalFresh benefits. This bill would require the California Student Aid Commission to partner with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to notify students of their potential eligibility for CalFresh. SB 761 further addresses the issue of food insecurity by broadening the programs of study that increase eligibility for CalFresh. SB761 ensures greater access to food assistance for all California college students."

As further explained by the author, "California colleges lack a standardized process to submit their programs for LPIE status. There is no uniform approach in colleges applying for their programs to be included in LPIE. This limits access for students, who often do not have access to their university's list of LPIE programs. SB 761 expands the LPIE definition to include students enrolled at least half-time in any program of study at a two or four year public institution of higher education better ensuring that students at all levels have equitable access to food benefits."

Arguments in Support

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges states the measure will assist students seeking basic needs supports as "many eligible student, estimated to be at least 400,00 students, remain unaware of CalFresh, hesitate to apply due to stigma, or fail to meet the eligibility criteria outlined under existing Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIEs). To remedy both challenges, SB 761 would direct the California Student Aid Commission, to add an "opt-in" permission for potentially CalFresh eligible students on their Cal Grant delivery system account, allowing CSAC to share their contact information with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and share with their liaison for higher education, and connect with students about their eligibility and assist in applying for CalFresh benefits."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund costs of approximately \$440,000 for the CDSS to hire two full-time permanent staff to implement the data sharing requirements of the bill.
- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to the UC and CSU.
- 3) According to CSAC, by facilitating increased access to federal benefits for college students the bill may result in millions of dollars in additional federal funds to help higher education students pay for food costs.

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, McNeerney, 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: 6-0-1

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Celeste Rodriguez

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

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

UPDATED

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