
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 761
Author: Ashby (D), et al.
Amended: 9/3/25 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 4/9/25
AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Laird

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/21/25
AYES: Arreguín, Ochoa Bogh, Becker, Limón, Pérez

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/23/25
AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0, 6/4/25
AYES: 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
NO VOTE RECORDED: Reyes

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 60-0, 9/11/25 – Roll call not available

SUBJECT: CalFresh: student eligibility

SOURCE: Alliance for a Better Community
California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy
Junior Leagues of California State Public Affairs Committee
Southern California College Attainment Network

DIGEST: This bill (1) requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to amend its Grant Delivery System to ensure students who may be eligible for

CalFresh are identified; (2) deems campus-based programs of study at a public institution of higher education, as specified, as a state-approved local education program that increases employability, as having an “employment and training component” and therefore qualify for the student exemption for CalFresh eligibility.

Assembly Amendments of 9/3/25 (1) clarify that data may be shared for the sole purpose of identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources; (2) prohibits data shared pursuant to this bill from being shared with any other entity or used for any purpose other than for identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources, including conducting direct outreach to students about the CalFresh program; (3) requires that students provide their separate and distinct consent, rather than their permission, to have their contact information shared; and, (4) impose a start date of July 1, 2026, relative to state-approved local educational programs that increase employability.

ANALYSIS:

Existing federal law:

- 1) Prohibits an individual who is enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education from eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, unless the student qualifies for an exemption. To be eligible for an exemption, a student must meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - a) Be age 17 or younger, or age 50 or older.
 - b) Be physically or mentally “unfit.”
 - c) Be receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) under Title IV of the federal Social Security Act (known as CalWORKs in California).
 - d) Be employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week.
 - e) Be participating in a state or federally financed work-study program during the regular school year, as specified.
 - f) Be participating in an on-the-job training program, as specified.

- g) Be responsible for a child under 6.
- h) Be responsible for the care of a child 6-11 years old when the State agency has determined that adequate child care is not available to enable the student to attend class and comply with the work requirements.
- i) Be a single parent enrolled in an institution of higher education on a full-time basis (as determined by the institution) and be responsible for the care of a dependent child under age 12.
- j) Be enrolled in an employment and training or another job-training program, as specified. (Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 273.5)

Existing state law:

- 1) Requires CSAC to notify, in writing, a recipient of a Cal Grant award if that student's grant includes any amount of funding that has been derived from the TANF block grant or state match, in order for the student to verify that the student qualifies for the exemption from the CalFresh program student eligibility rules. (Education Code (EC) § 69519.3)
- 2) Requires CSAC to notify students of their exemption from the CalFresh program student eligibility rules and their potential eligibility for CalFresh benefits, to the extent CSAC possesses the pertinent information and is permitted by federal law to use information to determine a student's CalFresh eligibility. (EC § 69519.3)
- 3) Requires each campus of the California State University (CSU) and each community college district, and requests and each campus of the University of California (UC), each independent institution of higher education, and each private postsecondary educational institution, to use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data to identify students who meet the income qualifications for CalFresh. (EC § 66023.6)
- 4) Requires each CSU campus and each community college district to send an email to the campus-based email account associated with a student informing the student that they may qualify for CalFresh if the student can also meet one of the exemptions. The email must encourage the student to contact the local county welfare agency to apply for CalFresh and include the contact

information for the local county welfare agency and the designated campus staff who can assist the student in applying for CalFresh. (EC § 66023.6)

This bill:

- 1) Requires CSAC to amend its Grant Delivery System, by January 1, 2027, to ensure both of the following:
 - a) Students who might be eligible for CalFresh through its Grant Delivery System are identified.
 - b) Students identified as potentially eligible for CalFresh have the ability to provide separate and distinct consent to have the student's contact information shared with the Department of Social Services (DSS) for the sole purpose of identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources, including conducting direct outreach.
- 2) Requires CSAC to provide DSS with information for students who have provided separate and distinct consent to have their contact information shared pursuant to # 3 and # 5 below.
- 3) Requires DSS and CSAC to develop a data-sharing agreement meeting the requirements of applicable state and federal law and regulations, under which CSAC shall share the student information described in # 1 and # 2 above.
- 4) Prohibits data shared pursuant to this bill from being shared with any other entity or used for any purpose other than for identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources, including conducting direct outreach to students about the CalFresh program.
- 5) Requires DSS and CSAC to develop a data-sharing agreement meeting the requirements of applicable state and federal law and regulations, under which CSAC shall share the student information with DSS. Authorizes DSS to share the student information with the appropriate county human services agency and the appropriate public postsecondary education systemwide office of the campus in which the student is enrolled for the sole purpose of identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources, including conducting direct outreach to students about the

CalFresh program.

- 6) Requires counties, California Community Colleges (CCCs), and CSU, and requests the University of California (UC), (if a data-sharing agreement has been entered into) beginning with the 2027-28 academic year, to contact all students who opted in to have their contact information shared with DSS for the purposes of informing students about on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources, including the CalFresh program.
- 7) Requires, beginning on or before July 1, 2026, any campus-based program of study at a public institution of higher education, to the extent permitted by federal law, to be considered as a state-approved local educational program that increases employability that has a component that is equivalent to a required federal component, as specified.
- 8) Requires the office of the Chancellor of the CCC and the office of the Chancellor of the CSU, and requests the office of the President of UC, to submit to DSS a list of their offered campus-based programs of study. Requires DSS to approve those programs.
- 9) Authorizes a campus-based program at a campus of the CCCs, CSU, or UC that is not included in the list, or that is rejected by DSS, to submit a certification application to DSS. Authorizes DSS to approve the certification application for campus-based programs that meet specified requirements. Prohibits these segments of postsecondary education from being required to resubmit to DSS a list of their offered campus-based programs of study if those programs have been approved as a local educational program that increases employability.
- 10) Requires DSS, by September 1, 2026, and annually thereafter until 2030, to report to the legislative committees on Higher Education, Education, and Human Services in both houses (and post on its website) on all of the following information:
 - a) The number of state-approved campus-based local educational programs that increase employability that are approved, disaggregated by name and campus.
 - b) The number of pending applications, disaggregated by name and campus.

- c) The number of applications denied, disaggregated by name and campus, and the reason for the denials.
- 11) Requires DSS to implement and administer these provisions through all-county letters or similar instructions that shall have the same force and effect as regulations.
- 12) Requires DSS, by May 31, 2026, to issue a guidance letter to the CCC Chancellor's Office, the CSU Chancellor's Office, and the Office of the President of UC that notifies them of the changes made pursuant to this bill.
- 13) Strikes existing provisions requiring DSS to issue a guidance letter to counties, the CCC Chancellor's Office, the CSU Chancellor's Office, and the Office of the President of UC relating to submission of a certification application for programs that increase employability.

Comments

Sharing of student data. This bill requires CSAC to provide a way for students who may be eligible for CalFresh to give permission to have their contact information shared with DSS. This approach appears to be generally modeled on a data-sharing agreement between Compton Community College and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services. Students enrolled in Compton College who have submitted a FAFSA are asked if they are interested in being evaluated for county services. Consent forms are provided to students who answer in the affirmative. Compton College then provides the county with student data to be matched with county caseload records to identify CalFresh participation among those students. Compton College uses the results to initiate targeted CalFresh outreach to students. According to the LA County Department of Public Social Services, of the 1,136 students who signed the consent form from the inception of this project, only 156 students were already receiving CalFresh (980 students were not). Of the 980 students who were not already receiving CalFresh, 470 students have since been connected to CalFresh through this partnership.

Programs to increase employability. One of the criteria for students to be eligible for CalFresh is enrollment in an employment and training or another job-training program. Federal regulations require an employment and training program to include specified components, including educational programs or activities to improve basic skills, build work readiness, or otherwise improve employability including educational programs determined by the State agency (DSS) to expand

the job search abilities or employability of those subject to the program.

In accordance with federal regulation, programs that qualify as a program that increases employability must meet two criteria:

- a) Be government-run; and,
- b) Contain the equivalent of a CalFresh employment and training component listed in federal regulations.

According to the federal regulations, allowable educational programs or activities may include, but are not limited to, courses or programs of study that are part of a program of career and technical education, adult basic skills, work readiness training, and instructional programs in English as a second language. The regulations further prescribe that only educational components that directly enhance the employability of the participants are allowable. A direct link between the education and job-readiness must be established for a component to be approved.

Campus based programs that meet these requirements must submit an application to DSS, which maintains a list of approved programs on its website. Any newly qualifying programs that meet the eligibility requirements after September 1, 2022, must be identified within six months of the formation of the program. After September 1, 2022, the list will be updated monthly to identify new programs, newly qualifying programs and previously approved programs that no longer meet the criteria. As of May 1, 2023, there were over 8,300 programs in California institutions of higher education that have been approved by DSS as containing at least one employment and training component, making students who participate in these programs exempt from the CalFresh student eligibility rule.

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh-resource-center/policy>

This bill requires any campus-based program of study that has a component equivalent to an employment and training component (pursuant to federal regulations) to be considered as a state-approved local education program that increases employability (to the extent permitted by federal law). This change eliminates DSS' role in reviewing individual programs, leaving it up to the institutions of higher education to determine which programs have a component equivalent to an employment and training component.

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

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill would impose the following costs:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund costs of approximately \$440,000 for the DSS 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/9/25)

Alliance for a Better Community (co-source)
California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy (co-source)
Junior Leagues of California State Public Affairs Committee (co-source)
Southern California College Attainment Network (co-source)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
Association of Pupil Services and Attendance Counselors
C5LA
California Association of Food Banks
California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office
California Community Foundation
California Opportunity Youth Network
California State Student Association
California Student Aid Commission
Citrus College
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
College Access Plan
Fulfillment Fund
Go Public Schools
Grace Institute - End Child Poverty in CA
Junior League of Palo Alto-Mid Peninsula
Junior League of San Jose
Kid City Hope Place
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Los Angeles Urban Foundation
Los Angeles Urban League
MOSTe

North Orange County Community College District
San Bernardino Community College District
San Diego Hunger Coalition
San Francisco Rising
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
Swipe Out Hunger
UCLA Undergraduate Student Association Council
University of California
University of California Student Association
Western Center on Law & Poverty
Young Invincibles

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/9/25)

None received

Prepared by: Lynn Lorber / ED. / (916) 651-4105
9/11/25 11:02:56

**** **END** ****