

Date of Hearing: April 12, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 1747 (Weber) – As Amended April 4, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Food assistance: higher education students.

**SUMMARY:** Requires, as a condition of participation in the Cal Grant Program, each public and private postsecondary educational institution to take a number of steps to facilitate student access to nutrition programs. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States that the Legislature intends to increase the college graduation rates of low-income Californians and to reduce the incidence of economic hardship and hunger among low-income college students.
- 2) Requires, as a condition of participation in the Cal Grant Program, each public and private postsecondary educational institution, to do both of the following:
  - a) Ensure that on each campus there is access to surcharge-free transactions using the electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system, as specified; and,
  - b) Increase access to and information about the Restaurant Meals Program on campus, as specified.
- 3) Specifies that a public or private postsecondary education institution is not required to create, operate, or maintain an EBT system on behalf of on-campus food vendors.
- 4) Stipulates that the provisions of this bill shall apply only to contracts renewed or entered into on or after January 1, 2017, to the extent any contract would be substantially impaired as a result of the new requirements.
- 5) Allows private nonprofit or public postsecondary educational institutions that are successful in raising money for CalFresh outreach activities to receive matching funds from the United States Department of Agriculture, as specified.
- 6) Creates the Public Higher Education Pantry Assistance Program Account (PHEPAPA) in the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP); and, stipulates that, upon appropriation by the Legislature, funds in the PHEPAPA shall be allocated to the State Department of Social Services for allocation to food banks, as specified, that meet both of the following criteria:
  - a) The primary function of the food bank is the distribution of food to low-income households; and,
  - b) The food bank has identified specific costs associated with supporting on-campus pantry and hunger relief efforts serving low-income students.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Authorizes the Cal Grant Program, administered by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), to provide grants to financially needy students to attend college. The Cal Grant

programs include both the entitlement and the competitive Cal Grant awards. The Program consists of the Cal Grant A, Cal Grant B, and Cal Grant C programs; eligibility is based upon financial need, grade point average, residency, and other eligibility criteria, as specified (Education Code (EC) Section 69430, et seq.).

- 2) Requires institutions to meet specified criteria in order to participate in the Cal Grant Program, as specified (EC 69432.7).
- 3) Establishes the EFAP within the State Treasury; and, authorizes the Controller to transfer from the Personal Income Tax Fund to the EFAP Fund not in excess of the sum of the amounts designated by individuals, as specified (Revenue and Taxation Code Section 18852).
- 4) Establishes the EBT Act, and defines the EBT system as the program designed to provide benefits to those eligible to receive public assistance benefits such as CalWORKs and CalFresh (Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 10065, et seq.).
- 5) Establishes that an EBT recipient may be charged a fee for cash withdrawal transactions that exceed four per month, as specified, by state and federal law and customarily charged to other customers (WIC 10072).
- 6) Establishes under federal law the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) pursuant to the Food Stamp Act of 1964; and, establishes in California statute, the CalFresh program to administer the provision of federal SNAP benefits to families and individuals meeting certain criteria, as specified (WIC 18900, et seq.).
- 7) Establishes the Restaurant Meals Program under SNAP to allow eligible homeless, disabled, or elderly recipients to purchase hot, prepared food from participating restaurants (7 U.S.C. Section 2020).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** *Double referral.* This measure was heard, and passed out of the Assembly Human Services Committee, with a vote of 5 -1, on March 29, 2016.

*Background.* A growing number of college students are enrolled in SNAP, but few students who receive SNAP benefits can purchase food on college campuses. According to a December 2015 report, by Wisconsin Hope Lab, entitled, "Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food and Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates," of a survey of more than 4,000 undergraduates at 10 community colleges across the nation, half of all of the respondents reported that they struggle with food and/or housing insecurity. The report also found that 20 percent of the student respondents indicated that they are hungry.

*Need for the measure.* According to the author, "Hunger and homelessness among college students has grown in frequency in recent years. Meanwhile, the cost to attend a college or university has increased while opportunities for low-income Californians admitted into a state college or university has decreased."

This measure is the first step in supporting economic diversity at California's colleges and universities to help improve graduation rates for low-income college students by ensuring they are eligible to have more access to fresh and health food while on campus.

*Segments involvement to combat the hunger pains.* The University of California (UC) has made tackling the issue of student hunger a priority. The UC launched the Global Food Initiative, and in March 2015, the UC President allocated \$75,000 per campus to support the effort; looking inward, ensuring that its own students have food security, as it takes on the bigger issue of hunger around the world. Systemwide, UC campuses have begun surveying students in order to assess the scope of food security issues and have begun implementing short-term relief where needed as campuses explore long-term solutions that address student nutrition. Many UC campuses have food pantries and partner with local food banks.

The California State University (CSU) Chancellor commissioned in February 2015, a study to shed light on how CSU campuses were meeting the needs of displaced and food insecure students and to offer recommendations to ensure success and graduation for these students. The study found, among others, that student survey results showed 24 percent of students expressing they had food insecurities; 11 campuses had programs for food insecure students, ranging from small food pantries to large programs and services; five campuses incorporate students' needs as part of student success directives and the university mission; and, students who experienced food and/or housing instability reported high levels of stress and the need for single points of contact.

Committee staff understands that the California Community Colleges (CCC) does not have a systemwide plan to help combat student food insecurities issues; however, some CCC campuses have varying plans in place to help address the hunger needs of the students.

*Previous legislation.* AB 832 (Weber) of 2013, which was held in the Assembly Human Services Committee, would have required all convenience stores and bookstores at UC, CSU and the CCC to accept the use of EBT cards.

AB 756 (Mitchell) of 2011, which died in the Assembly Human Services Committee, would have prohibited surcharges on ATM withdrawals and point-of-sale transactions for CalWORKs recipients when using their state-issued EBT cards.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
California Association of Food Banks  
California Federation of Teachers  
California Food Policy Advocates  
California Immigrant Policy Center  
California Primary Care Association  
California State Student Association  
Courage Campaign  
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter  
Orange County Food Access Coalition

St. Anthony Foundation  
University of California Student Association  
Western Center on Law and Poverty  
Young Invincibles

**Opposition**

California Bankers Association (based on prior version)  
California Credit Union League (based on prior version)

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