

Date of Hearing: April 18, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 584 (Quirk-Silva) – As Amended April 4, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Student financial aid: California Student Opportunity and Access Program: Orange County.

**SUMMARY:** Requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) ensure that at least one California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) consortium be established in Orange County. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Declares that a special law is necessary because of the unique needs of the pupils of Orange County.
- 2) Stipulates that contingent upon sufficient funding provided for the establishment of at least one Cal-SOAP consortium in the annual Budget Act or another statute, CSAC shall ensure the Cal-SOAP consortium is established in Orange County.
- 3) Requires CSAC to maintain authority over an established consortium in Orange County.

**EXISTING LAW:** Authorizes CSAC as the administrators of Cal-SOAP, to apportion funds on a progress payment schedule for the support of projects designed to increase the accessibility of postsecondary educational opportunities for any of the following elementary and secondary school pupils: a) pupils who are from low-income families; b) pupils who would be the first in their families to attend college; c) pupils who are from schools or geographic regions with documented low-eligibility or college participation rates; and, d) pupils who are homeless youth, as specified. Requires that the projects be proposed and operated through a consortium that involves at least one secondary school district office, at least one four-year college or university, at least one community college, and at least one agency, as specified. Authorizes CSAC to develop additional regulations regarding the awarding of project grants and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the individual projects (Education Code Section 69561).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Background.* The California Student Opportunity and Access Program was established by the Legislature in 1978 and is administered by CSAC. Almost forty years later, Cal-SOAP remains instrumental in improving the flow of information about postsecondary education and financial aid while raising the achievement levels of at-risk populations throughout the state.

As of November 2016, Cal-SOAP projects are operated in 14 locations throughout California by consortia made up of secondary and postsecondary schools and community agencies. Cal-SOAP works in cooperation with other intersegmental outreach programs to avoid service duplication. Current Cal-SOAP projects include: Central Coast, Central Valley, East Bay, Greater Long Beach, Los Angeles, Merced, Northcoast, San Diego/Imperial County, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Barbara, Solano, South County Gilroy, and South San Joaquin Valley. Annual state funding for Cal-SOAP totals \$7.7 million, or about \$550,000 per consortium.

To note, because each project specializes in serving students within its community, the types of programs and services may differ. However, the projects share the common goal of improving the flow of information about postsecondary education and financial aid while raising achievement levels of targeted students. Some common services provided by the consortia include advising, tutoring, parent outreach, and college awareness workshops.

During 2016, through November, approximately 349 tutors and 379 college advisers were hired for all regions; approximately 242 Cash-for-College workshops were coordinated for all regions, serving an estimated 15,800 students and parents; and, approximately 270 financial aid workshops were coordinated for all regions, serving an estimated 14,400 students.

Committee staff understands that to date, there has been no involvement by CSAC in establishing a new Cal-SOAP consortium; however, according to CSAC, the Commission regularly submits Budget Change Proposals seeking funds in order to establish more Cal-SOAP consortium.

*Need for the measure.* According to the author, "Orange County students overall, outscore, outperform, and outrank the state average on standardized testing and other measures of achievement." However, the author contends that, minority students in the Anaheim, Garden Grove, and Santa Ana School Districts are far more likely to drop out of high school than their peers with Latinos representing 75 percent of the students who drop out of high school in Orange County.

The author argues that, "This education achievement gap is fueled by family and community poverty, language and cultural barriers, lack of advocacy, and limited education support outside of a stressed school system."

This measure seeks to address these factors by assisting students in improving their academic performance and gaining exposure about postsecondary education and available financial aid, by establishing a Cal-SOAP consortium in Orange County.

*Policy considerations.* Based on information provided by the author's office, arguably, Orange County would most likely benefit from the establishment of a Cal-SOAP consortium. However, the *Committee may wish to consider if it is the best policy to specifically name a region in statute, knowing that there are other regions that have similar needs and also lack Cal-SOAP consortium.*

Additionally, since the implementation of this measure is contingent upon sufficient funding, *the author may wish to work with the Department of Finance, the Legislative Budget Committees, and CSAC, in order to determine if more funds can and will be appropriated to CSAC for the creation of additional Cal-SOAP consortium.*

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

None on file

### **Opposition**

None on file

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