

Date of Hearing: April 2, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 2458 (Berman) – As Introduced February 13, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: student parents.

**SUMMARY:** Establishes the Greater Accessibility, Information, Notice, and Support (GAINS) for Student Parents Act; requiring each campus of the California Community Colleges (CCC) and the California State University (CSU), and requesting each campus of the University of California (UC), to, in part, (1) develop and implement a campus policy for estimating and adjusting cost of attendance information for student parents, as specified; (2) establish a data field in the campus's data management information system to identify student parents for certain purposes; and, (3) update its campus net price calculator to include a baseline student parent cost estimate, as specified. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the GAINS for Student Parents Act.
- 2) Requires that information, the CCC, CSU, and UC currently provide on its web page for student parents include:
  - a) Federal and state tax credits, including, but not limited to all of the following:
    - i) The federal Earned Income Tax Credit;
    - ii) The California Earned Income Tax Credit;
    - iii) The Child Tax Credit;
    - iv) The Young Child Tax Credit;
    - v) The Foster Youth Tax Credit;
    - vi) The federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit;
    - vii) The federal American Opportunity Tax Credit; and,
    - viii) The federal Lifetime Learning Credit.
  - b) Free tax filing services offered online through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance programs;
  - c) State and federal financial aid applications and programs, including but not limited to:
    - i) The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
    - ii) The California Dream Act Application (CADAA);

- iii) Awards for students with dependent children, as specified; and,
  - iv) Any other federal or state financial aid application or program available for students with dependent children.
- d) The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program;
  - e) Cost of attendance adjustment information, including the dependent care allowance;
  - f) Resources, as determined by the institution to be most appropriate, for campus or local childcare providers; and,
  - g) Any other financial support or income available for student parents.
- 3) Requires the CCC Office of the Chancellor and the CSU Office of the Chancellor, and requests the UC Office of the President to, develop and disseminate a policy to estimate and adjust cost of attendance information for student parents. The policy shall include, on or before January 1, 2025, student parent cost of attendance policy guidance that includes, but is not limited to, both of the following:
- a) A financial aid methodology to calculate and update a student parent's cost of attendance that includes the actual expected costs of food, housing, transportation, and dependent childcare. This methodology shall be based on available annual cost of attendance information that includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
    - i) Food plans developed by the United States Department of Agriculture;
    - ii) The California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) reimbursement ceilings for subsidized childcare, disaggregated by county, age, and types of care;
    - iii) The actual cost of on-campus family housing, the cost of a student parent's off-campus housing, and, if a student parent does not have safe or adequate housing, the fair market rent, as specified, for an apartment in the metropolitan area or nonmetropolitan county where the campus is located, disaggregated by student parent family size; and,
    - iv) Transportation costs, disaggregated by student parent family size, that considers information based on institutional survey responses and data provided pursuant to the Student Aid Commissions' Student Expenses and Resources Survey.
  - b) Model instructions for purposes of all of the following:
    - i) Identifying a student parent for purposes of adjusting the student parent's cost of attendance to include food, housing, transportation, and childcare expenses. The model instructions shall include, but are not limited to, confirmation by a financial aid officer based on information found in the student parent's FAFSA or the CADAA;

- ii) Updating and posting cost of attendance and dependent care allowance information, using student-friendly language, on campus internet websites. The posted information shall include, but is not limited to, financial aid internet websites, and the student parent internet web page, as specified;
  - iii) Sharing cost of attendance information in admitted student materials;
  - iv) Explaining the dependent care allowance to student parents; and,
  - v) Informing student parents of affordable childcare options offered by the campus or within the local community.
- c) Requires each campus of the CCC and the CSU, and requests each campus of the UC to, develop and implement a campus policy, using the policy and policy guidance developed and disseminated, as specified;
- d) Requires each campus of the CCC and the CSU, and requests each campus of the UC, to do all of the following:
- i) Establish, on or before January 1, 2025, a data field in the campus's data management information system to identify student parents. The data field shall use confirmation from all campus sources available to identify student parents. For each student parent, the data field shall include, but is not limited to, any of the following forms of confirmation:
    - (1) Confirmation by a financial aid officer based on information found in a student parent's FAFSA or CADAA;
    - (2) Confirmation under a government program, such as campus CalFresh or CalWORKs officers;
    - (3) Confirmation by student services staff who serve the student parent, such as a campus childcare center, family resource center, or other program;
    - (4) Confirmation by the campus registrar's office of a student parent with priority enrollment status; and,
    - (5) Confirmation by any other campus staff to reduce duplication of efforts and reduce the administrative burden across all campus departments in identifying a student parent.
  - ii) Enter student parent data in the data field established, as specified;
  - iii) Report student parent data obtained pursuant to this subdivision to the chief administrative officer of the applicable segment for inclusion in the California Cradle-to-Career (C2C) Data System; and,

- iv) Use the data field established for additional purposes, which may include, but are not limited to, granting priority course registration and providing information about available public benefits to student parents.
  - e) Requires each campus of the CCC and the CSU, and requests each campus of the UC, to update the campus net price calculator to include a baseline student parent cost estimate, disaggregated by age and number of dependent children, using the methodologies and information, as specified, and any available federal guidance on best practices.
- 4) Defines the following terms for purposes of the GAINS for Student Parents Act:
- a) “Parent” means either of the following:
    - i) A biological parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, or legal guardian of a child or adult dependent; or,
    - ii) An individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent, including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative, with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child’s welfare.
  - b) “Student parent” means any parent who is an enrolled or admitted student at a CCC, CSU, or UC.
- 5) Finds, in part, the following:
- a) California has made great strides to reduce poverty among low-income families with children through efforts to increase receipt of state and federal aid;
  - b) To adequately plan their attendance, student parents need accurate estimates of the total cost of college, including tuition and fees, food, housing, books and supplies, transportation, and the additional costs related to parenting;
  - c) Colleges are federally required to disclose college costs through net price calculators that are based on the assumption that students are part of their parent’s household, and often they do not account for the additional costs related to parenting; and,
  - d) Helping student parents graduate and enter careers that pay a living wage sooner helps California as a whole, and offers student parents and their children a more prosperous future.
- 6) States that the Legislature intends to help Californians with children better afford college by ensuring that they obtain the financial aid that they are eligible to receive.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act, setting forth the mission of the CCC, the CSU, and the UC (Education Code (EC) Section 66010, et seq.).

- 2) Requires the CCC and the CSU, and requests the UC to provide students with information on the California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC), as defined; to grant priority registration to student parents, as defined; and to create a website with resources for student parents (EC Section 66025.81).
- 3) Requires each campus of the CSU and the CCC, and requests each campus of the UC, to host on its website a student parent internet webpage that contains information that clearly lists all on- and off-campus student parent services and resources, as specified, including, among other student parent services and resources, information on the California Earned Income Tax Credit and the Young Child Tax Credit (EC Section 66027.81).
- 4) Establishes the Cradle-to-Career (C2C) Data System Act, which, in part, creates the C2C Data System. The C2C Data System, is for the purpose of connecting individuals and organizations to trusted information and resources. The C2C Data System, in part, shall be considered a source for actionable data and research on education, economic, and health outcomes for individuals, families, and communities, and provide for expanded access to tools and services that support the navigation of the education-to-employment pipeline. The data system shall be used to provide access to data and information necessary to provide insights into critical milestones in the education-to-employment pipeline, including insight regarding early learning and care to grade 12, inclusive, and into higher education, skills training opportunities, and employment to better enable individuals to maximize their educational and career opportunities, and to foster evidence-based decisionmaking to help the state build a more equitable future (EC 10850, et seq.).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** *Need for the measure.* According to the author, California has made great strides to reduce poverty among low-income families with children through efforts to increase receipt of state and federal aid. A California Competes study released in February 2021, entitled *Untapped Opportunity: Understanding and Advancing Prospects for Californians without a College Degree*, found that California is home to approximately 3,900,000 residents with dependent children who lack a college degree, making it difficult to earn a family-sustaining wage.

California Competes also found in their analysis of the American Community Survey data from 2017 to 2021 and National Postsecondary Student Aid Study administrative collection data from 2020 that California is home to approximately 300,000 undergraduate student parents, 61% of which are first-generation college students and 72% are students of color.<sup>1</sup> [Since this particular report was released, California is now home to approximately 400,000 student parents.]

Further the author states that, “the cost of college, including childcare, is one of their biggest barriers to accessing and completing higher education.<sup>2</sup> According to the Public Policy Institute of California’s report released in December 2021, titled *Keeping College Affordable for California Students*, helping students better afford college will help close persistent racial equity gaps in college readiness, access, completion, degree attainment, and workforce entry.”

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2023). [[Data set](#)]. 2019–20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study Administrative Collection (NPSAS:20-AC) [[Data set](#)].

<sup>2</sup> Goldrick-Rab, S., Welton, C.R., & Coca, V. Hope Center for College, Community and Justice. (2020). [Parenting while in college: Basic needs insecurity among students with children.](#)

Additionally, the author contends that, “instead, students are forced to individually request an adjustment – a “[dependent care allowance](#)” – from financial aid administrators, if they even know this is an option. In some cases, student parents may be asked to provide further proof of their dependent care costs or be incorrectly denied adjustments. This process is not well understood nor consistently applied across institutions, resulting in unnecessary burdens on students and financial aid administrators. In fact, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that student parents are not maximizing their federal financial aid.”<sup>3</sup>

*Student parents.* According to California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy, California is home to approximately 400,000 student parents, a majority of whom are first-generation and students of color. Unlike their non-parenting peers, student parents have additional childcare expenses, which are not accounted for in the college’s estimate of a student parent’s cost of attendance. Federal regulations allow financial aid administrators to adjust a student’s cost of attendance to include the expenses incurred for dependent care, however, institutions often do not take full advantage of this federal flexibility.

Released in January 2020, titled *Clarifying the True Cost of College for Student Parents*, California Competes estimates that student parents pay an annual additional cost of attendance of \$7,592 more per child in an academic year than non-parenting students attending college, once childcare and food costs are explicitly included. As a result, despite having higher grade point averages than non-parenting peers, they are less likely to complete a degree or certificate.

This creates barriers in accessing and completing higher education.

As stated above, student parents have to individually request adjustments to their cost of attendance to account for their parenting expenses. In some cases, student parents are asked to provide further proof of their child-rearing costs or are incorrectly denied adjustments. This process is not standardized across institutions, resulting in unnecessary burdens on students and financial aid administrators.

Additionally, because campuses do not systematically identify student parents, the limited actionable data on their needs and outcomes makes it harder to design and provide tailored support.

This measure seeks to ensure that student parents can access the financial aid they are entitled to and improve data collection for student parents by accomplishing the following:

- Require automatic financial aid cost of attendance adjustments for student parents to better account for their expenses, thereby maximizing access to available financial aid;
- Require institutions to uniformly collect and report data on student parents to system offices; and,

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<sup>3</sup> GAO (2019). [Higher Education: More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid.](#)

- Share student parent data from the higher education system offices with the Office of C2C Data System for inclusion in the longitudinal data system, allowing California to evaluate and identify policies that support student parent success.

*Cradle-to-Career Data System.* Legislation passed in 2019 [SB 75 (Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 51, Statutes of 2019)] established a statewide, longitudinal data system for California. Over the course of 2020 and the first half of 2021, more than 200 people from 15 state agencies and many educational institutions, research and policy organizations, and community groups worked together to design a blueprint for the C2C Data System. The Legislature approved funding for the C2C Data System in its 2021-22 Annual Budget Act. The data system is housed within and is implemented by the Government Operations Agency (GovOps). While the CSC Data System is currently inoperative, Committee Staff understands that the goal of GovOps is for the C2C dashboard of data to be available in 2024.

*Committee comments.* Should this measure be enacted, it will go into effect on January 1, 2025; however, that may not be enough time for the CCC Office of the Chancellor, the CSU Office of the Chancellor, or the UC Office of the President to develop, and disseminate a policy by January 1, 2025, as the measure currently stipulates. To provide adequate time for the systemwide offices to adhere to this provision, *Committee Staff recommends, and the author has accepted, the following amendments:*

66027.82 (b) ***On or before July 31, 2025,*** ~~The~~ ***the*** office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges and the office of the Chancellor of the California State University shall, and the office of the President of the University of California is requested to, develop and disseminate a policy to estimate and adjust cost of attendance information for student parents. The policy shall include, ~~on or before January 1, 2025,~~

Additionally, as currently drafted, each campus of the CCC and CSU is required, and each campus of the UC is requested to, develop and implement a campus policy, using the policy and policy guidance developed by the respective Offices of the Chancellor and President. However, Committee Staff understands that the intent of the author is for each campus to implement the policy from the respective Offices of the Chancellor and President. To clarify the intent and provide the segments time to implement the requirements, *Committee Staff recommends, and the author has accepted, the following amendments:*

66027.82 (c) ***On or before the start of the 2026-27 academic year,*** ~~Each~~ ***each*** campus of the California Community Colleges and the California State University shall, and each campus of the University of California is requested to, ~~develop and implement a campus policy, using the policy and policy guidance~~ developed and disseminated pursuant to subdivision (b).

Further, in order to provide the segments sufficient time to implement other provisions this measure, *Committee Staff recommends, and the author has accepted, the following amendments:*

66027.82 (d) ***On or before the start of the 2026-27 academic year,*** ~~Each~~ ***each*** campus of the California State University and the California Community Colleges shall, and each campus of the University of California is requested to, do all of the following:

- (1) Establish, ~~on or before January 1, 2025,~~ a data field. . . .

(e) *On or before the start of the 2026-27 academic year*, Each *each* campus of the California Community Colleges and the California State University shall, and each campus of the University of California is requested to. . . .

Lastly, Committee Staff understands that the intent of the author is to ensure that the specified student parent data is reported from the campuses to its respective Offices of the Chancellor and Office of the President, to be included in the C2C Data System. *Committee Staff recommends, and the author has accepted, the following amendments:*

66027.82 (3) Report student parent data obtained pursuant to this subdivision to the ~~chief administrative officer of the applicable segment~~ *office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the office of the Chancellor of the California State University, and the office of the President of the University of California, respectively* for inclusion in the California Cradle-to-Career Data System established pursuant to Article 1 (commencing with Section 10850) of Chapter 8.5 of Part 7 of Division 1 of Title 1.

*Arguments in support.* According to the UC Student Association (UCSA), “because campuses do not systematically identify student parents, the limited actionable data on their needs and outcomes make it harder to design and provide tailored support. Despite student parents’ advocates continually requesting institutions to track this data in order to have better information for designing and providing support to student parents, institutions of higher education have not seen this as a priority.”

Further, UCSA states that, “comprehensively identifying student parents and increasing their access to financial aid already meant for them will allow student parents to better plan for, afford, and navigate their educational journeys.”

*Prior legislation.* AB 2881 (Berman), Chapter 935, Statutes of 2022, which, in part, requires the CCC and the CSU, and requests the UC to provide students with information on the California Special Supplemental Food Program for WIC, as defined; to grant priority registration to student parents, as defined; and to create a website with resources for student parents.

AB 1278 (Gabriel), Chapter 517, Statutes of 2019, requires each campus of the CSU and the CCC, and requests each campus of the UC, to include on the internet website-based account for an enrolled student, notification of, and a link to information on, specified public services and programs, including the CalFresh program, county or local housing resources, and county or local mental health services.

SB 173 (Dodd), Chapter 139, Statutes of 2019, requires the CDSS to create a standardized form to be used by community colleges and universities to verify the workstudy eligibility of students who are approved and anticipate participating in state or federal workstudy, for purpose of determining eligibility for CalFresh benefits.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Ascend  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Southern California  
BLU Educational Foundation



Cal State Student Association  
California Catholic Conference  
California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy (Co-Sponsor)  
Campaign for College Opportunity  
Center for Worklife Law  
Child Care Resource Center  
Early Edge California  
Generation Hope  
Grace Institute - End Child Poverty in CA  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Justice and Joy National Collaborative  
Lift Los Angeles  
Long Beach Community College District  
Michelson Center for Public Policy  
National Women's Law Center  
NextGen California  
Northern California College Promise Coalition  
Puente Learning Center  
Shine Together  
Student Senate for California Community Colleges  
Students Rising Above  
The Education Trust - West (Co-Sponsor)  
The Institute for College Access & Success  
uAspire  
Unite-LA, Inc.  
United Way of Greater Los Angeles  
University of California Student Association  
Won't She Do It, LLC  
Young Invincibles  
Young Women's Freedom Center  
Individuals (2)

**Opposition**

None on file.

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