

Date of Hearing: April 16, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 2150 (Arambula) – As Introduced February 6, 2024

SUBJECT: Public social services: higher education

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to develop and facilitate a training for basic needs directors and coordinators from campuses of the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC), and requires CDSS to convene a working group to identify and address barriers to student enrollment in social services offered by county human service agencies. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires a county human services agency to receive input from basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, or designated staff from each campus of a public institution of higher education when developing protocols for engaging with each CCC, CSU, or UC campus in the county. The county human services agency and each CCC, CSU, or UC campus in the county are encouraged to consult with stakeholders for the development of the protocols. The stakeholders to be consulted include:
 - a) A representative from each CCC, CSU, or UC campus in the county;
 - b) A counselor or other relevant professional staff from each campus of an CCC, CSU, or UC within the county;
 - c) Relevant organizations representing the interests of students, faculty, and staff from each campus of each CCC, CSU, or UC campus in the county; and,
 - d) Regionally relevant stakeholders basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, or designated staff from each CCC, CSU, or UC campus in the county.
- 2) Requires the State Department of Social Services to do the following:
 - a) Develop and facilitate a training, in consultation with stakeholders, as defined, to be available for basic needs directors, staff of a campus basic needs center, other designated professional staff from each campus of an institution of higher education, and eligible workers. The training will include the following:
 - i) Student income and how sources of student income can be evaluated for eligibility for services;
 - ii) Work requirements and how certain classes may defer working requirements for CalWORKs participants; and,
 - iii) The assessment and approval process of campus-based local programs that increase employability (LPIE);
 - b) Convene a workgroup that meets quarterly, comprised of all the following:

- i) All 58 county staff liaisons;
 - ii) At least four college campus basic needs directors or other designed campus staff from multiple regions and campuses;
 - iii) At least one staff member from each higher segment, including:
 - (1) The office of the Chancellor of the CSU;
 - (2) The office of the Chancellor of the CCC;
 - (3) The office of the President of the UC, as requested and if provided;
 - (4) The Center for Healthy Communities at California State University, Chico;
 - (5) Relevant stakeholders as needed to share best practices, updates, challenges, or other topics related to programs and service offered by the California Department of Social Services to students on CCC, CSU, and UC campuses;
 - c) Publish technical assistance provided in response to any requests submitted by counsel liaisons;
 - d) Submit, on or before June 30, 2026 and every three years thereafter, a report to the Legislature with findings and recommendations relating to enrollment success trends and services offered by the California Department of Social Service that may be available to students on CCC, CSU, and UC campuses. In establishing the findings of the report the CDSS will consult with stakeholders.
- 3) Defines “basic needs coordinator” as a basic needs coordinator at the CCC.
- 4) Makes the following Legislative findings and declarations as it relates to student basic needs including, but not limited to:
- a) California’s college students face an increasing level of food and housing insecurity. Just over half of California students are housing insecure and nearly 2/3 identify as food insecure;
 - b) Housing and food insecurity disproportionately impact low-income students, students of color, and adult learners;
 - c) Students often have unique eligibility factors that can impact their rejection or acceptance into public social services programs, including, student income, financial aid, and deferred work requirements; and,
 - d) Basic needs and student supports are key to upholding students’ dignity, belonging, academic achievement, and professional success.
- 5) States it is the intent of the Legislature to do the following:
- a) Eliminate inconsistency in rejections and acceptances for public social service programs based on student income and work requirements; and,

- b) Breakdown local silos to share best practices, examine data and trends for success, and promote statewide excellence.

EXISTING LAW: *Federal law.*

- 1) Restricts any individual, who is enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education from qualifying for SNAP benefits, unless the individual qualifies for an exception, as specified (7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 273.5(a)).
- 2) Clarifies that a college student, enrolled at least part-time, may qualify for SNAP nutritional benefits if they are:
 - a) Over the age of 50 or under the age of 17;
 - b) Physically or mentally unfit;
 - c) Receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families under Title IV of the Social Security Act;
 - d) Enrolled in a Job Opportunities and Basic Skills program under Title IV of the Social Security Act or its successor program;
 - e) Employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week and are paid to the equivalent of Federal minimum wage for 20 hours of work per week;
 - f) Participating in a state or federally financed work study program during the regular school year;
 - g) Participating in an on-the-job training program;
 - h) Responsible for the care of a child under the age of six;
 - i) Responsible for the care of a child between the ages of six and twelve when adequate child care is not available to enable the student to work 20 hours a week;
 - j) A single parent enrolled full-time and are responsible for a child under the age of 12; or,
 - k) Enrolled in a program associated with the Job Training Partnership Act of 1974; an employment and training program funded by Carl Perkins and Technical Education Act of 2006, as defined; a program associated with the Trade Act of 1974 as defined; or an employment and training program for low-income households operated by the State or local government. (CRF 273.5(b)).

State law.

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act and assigns the mission of the UC, the CSU and the CCC (Education Code (EDC) Section 66010, et seq.h).
- 2) Establishes by July 1, 2022 Basic Needs Centers and the position of a Basic Needs Coordinator at CCC campuses to provide students with single point of contact for on-and off-campus basic needs services, as defined (EDC Section 66023.5).

- 3) Requires campuses of the CCC and the CSU Board of Trustees, and requests the UC Board of Regents to provide all incoming students with educational information regarding the CalFresh, including the eligibility requirements, during campus orientation (EDC Section 66027.4).
- 4) Requires each campus of the CSU and CCC and requests the UC to include on the internet website-based student account associated with the student's attendance at the institution information, including the weblink, on the following public services and programs:
 - a) The CalFresh program;
 - b) Resources as determined by the institution for county or local housing services, as defined; and,
 - c) Resources as determined by the institution for county or mental health services (EDC Section 66027.6).
- 5) Establishes the California CalFresh program to administer federal SNAP monetary benefits to qualifying families and individuals, as specified (Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 18900 et seq.).
- 6) Requires a county human services agency to designate at least one employee as a staff liaison to serve as a contact for academic counselors and other professional staff at a campus of an institution of public higher education within the county to provide information on available public social services; additionally, requires the agency to develop protocols for engagement between the staff liaison and a campus of an institution of public higher education (WIC Code 1006).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Double referral.* AB 2150 (Arambula) was heard in the Assembly Committee on Human Services on April 02, 2024, where it passed with a 7 – 0 vote. A review of the impact the measure would have on human services agencies is addressed in the Assembly Committee on Human Services analysis.

Purpose of the measure. As expressed by the author, “many college students move hundreds of miles away from home, experience limited family support, and encounter financial complications tied to their scholarship or work requirements. Because these unique circumstances make navigating the complex eligibility requirements of public assistance programs particularly challenging, I authored AB 1326 (Arambula), Chapter of 570, Statutes of 2021 to create a county liaison of higher education to help students navigate these challenges. Since implementing AB 1326 (Arambula), there has been a lack of coordination across the state. To ensure that all students receive support, regardless of where they attend university, AB 2150 (Arambula) establishes a statewide network of basic needs coordinators and county liaisons of higher education to share best practices.”

AB 1325 (Arambula) Chapter 570, Statutes of 2021. In June 2020, CDSS published SB 77 CalFresh Student Data Report, on college student participation in CalFresh and methods for improving student participation in the social service. According to the report in the 2018-2019 academic year, 127,360 students successfully received CalFresh food benefits, but the report

found more than 500,000 students were likely to be eligible for the food benefits in the same academic year. The report estimated the student participation rate in CalFresh is between 18% to 30%.

In addition to CalFresh, qualifying students can receive additional assistance from a variety of social service programs offered by the county human services agency including mental health services, health insurance coverage, housing assistance, and funding for childcare. For example, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program partners with the CCC who provides education and vocation training that meets the CalWORKs at every community college. Addressing basic needs by increasing student participation in social service programs was a cornerstone of the Governor's Council for Post-Secondary Education's report "Recovery with Equity: A Roadmap for Higher Education After the Pandemic."¹ Specifically the report called for a simplified and integrated system that enables qualified college students access to the state's robust social services including CalFresh, housing programs, healthcare including mental health, direct aid; subsidized childcare and transportation. AB 1326 (Arambula) addressed this goal by mandating each county human services agency to have one liaison to serve as the point of contact for CCC, CSU, and UC in the county to help facilitate access to social services for students on campus. AB 1326 (Arambula) further required the county human services agencies to determine the effectiveness of the liaisons through a survey due January 1, 2025.

In June of 2022, All County Letter No. 22-48, directed all counties, regardless of whether there was a CCC, CSU, or UC to designate at least one employee to serve as a staff liaison for the purpose of helping students gain access to the social service programs offered by the county human services agencies. If the county has a CCC, CSU, or UC then the liaison would serve as the point of contact for academic counselors and other professional staff on campus; and, if the county did not have a campus, then the liaison would help students in the county gain access to services.

In January 2023, All County Information Notice I-85-22 was published to provide the a framework for the protocols for liaisons to follow when engaging with personnel on CCC, CSU, and UC campuses pursuant to the workgroup facilitated between CDSS and the public higher education segments.

AB 2150 (Arambula) builds upon the previous efforts of the author by creating a statewide working group to address the barriers preventing college students from accessing social services offered at the county level. Instead of having 52 different methods and procedures, AB 2150 (Arambula) would reduce confusion for students and staff on public postsecondary education institutions by creating a training on accessing social services, and would provide a centralize working group that would continuously meet to identify and address barriers to enrollment in social services programs for college students.

Basic need insecurity amongst college students. In 2023, the California Student Aid Commission published a student survey with responses from students across California on their food and housing insecurities. The survey recorded that 53% of respondents identified as housing insecure and 66% identified as food insecure.

¹ <https://careereducation.gov.ca.gov/RecoveryWithEquity.pdf>

In September 2023, the Community College League of California produced a report, “Affordability, Food, and Housing Access Taskforce Report: Real College California: Basic Needs among California Community College Students.” The report found more than 2/3 of CCC students surveyed in 2023 had experienced at least one basic needs insecurity. The report also concluded, 47% of students reported being food insecure, 58% reported being housing insecure, and 24% reported being homeless within the past year.² The report called for greater collaboration between CCC basic needs centers and state/local agencies for increased basic needs assistance for students. In May 2023, the Chancellor’s Office of the CCC published the first Basic Needs Services Center Report, which contained an update on the CCC compliance with SB 132 (Committee on Budget). Each of the 115 brick and mortar CCC have a basic needs center which provides services to students and 60 college campuses provided data on services to the Chancellor’s Office. Of the 60 colleges who reported data, the number of students served by category of resource is as follows:

- 31,361 received food security services;
- 4,156 received housing security services;
- 15,179 received support for transportation insecurities;
- 1,615 received mental health services;
- 4,466 received physical health services;
- 9,091 received technology support services; and,
- 524 received child support assistance.

The CSU Chancellor’s Office published a report in March 2024 required by the Budget Act of 2022, on “Student Mental Health and Basic Needs Initiatives Report.” Across all 23 CSU campuses, approximately 67,500 students were supported by the campus-based food pantries and approximately 22,825 students applied for CalFresh.³ The report indicated the benefits of AB 1325 (Arambula) as the “addition of California Department of Social Services’ (CDSS) county liaisons for higher education (AB 1326), greater collaboration between individual campuses and county offices is helping to identify challenges and barriers for students in obtaining CalFresh benefits.” The report further illustrated the impact of providing basic needs support by linking it to student success rates “Impact analyses on CSU campuses have shown that the persistence rates (retention and graduation) for students who receive basic needs services are higher than the average persistence rates for all students. Of note, among California State University, East Bay’s Black student population, the overall percentage of students who dropped out was 29 percent, while only three percent of Black students who received basic needs support did so.”

² https://cclleague.org/sites/default/files/images/basic_needs_among_california_community_college_students-final-2023.pdf

³ <https://www.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/government/Advocacy-and-State-Relations/legislativereports1/Mental-Health-and-Basic-Needs-Legislative-Report-2024.pdf>

Similar to the CSU, the UC Office of the President is also required to provide an annual report on “Basic Needs, Mental Health, and Repaid Rehousing,” which was published on February 1, 2024. The report found campus basic needs efforts served 78,070 students between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023. Between 2022 and 2023, the UC conducted two student experience surveys which found 43% of undergraduate students identified as being food insecure and 25% of UC graduate students identifying as food insecure. Finally, in appendix III of the report, each UC has been assigned a county liaison in accordance with AB 1325 (Arambula).

Arguments in support. As expressed by Generation UP, a student-led education advocacy organization, “AB 2150 will build on this success by ensuring higher education liaisons, county staff, and other stakeholders meet regularly to discuss improving the experiences and increasing public benefits enrollment among the college student population. College is hard enough without worrying about where your next meal will come from or where you will sleep, yet the pandemic has exacerbated these worries. In a survey of California students conducted by the Student Aid Commission, about half of the respondents reported increased monthly housing expenses and increased weekly food costs during the pandemic, with students across intersectional identities such as race, class, gender, and immigration status experiencing disproportionately higher levels. Individuals unable to meet their basic needs face short and long-term physical and mental health consequences. It can be devastating for college students as it negatively impacts their access, first-year retention, and academic success, leaving them more likely to drop out and undermining the investments that they and financial aid programs have made. Unfortunately, many students eligible for public benefits are not enrolled, which is a missed opportunity for students in need. This is especially troublesome given California’s status as the state that provides the most funding for these programs. For instance, an estimate from CDSS shows that only about 18-30% of students eligible for CalFresh are enrolled; we know AB 2150 will address this by improving the experiences of students in need and the community of social services.”

Arguments in opposition. As delineated by the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), “CWDA supports the goal of improving student access to social services programs. We also support the work of basic needs coordinators, who provide students struggling with housing and food insecurity with important outreach and assistance. However, CWDA has workload concerns with this bill. The requirement for the development of the protocols has been in place for a few years now and counties and public universities have only recently completed their protocols. The requirement to add additional participants in the process will mean that protocols will have to be redone.”

Furthermore, “county eligibility staff are already trained on student eligibility for the human services programs counties administer as part of their routine training. The county eligibility workforce is already stretched to capacity and attending additional training on topics already covered will be redundant. Lastly, the requirement that the new workgroup created in this bill meet quarterly and include the liaisons of every county in the state is additional workload for those liaisons that is not funded and it would place a disproportionate workload on small rural counties, some of which have less significant student populations, at a time when the county human services workforce is already stretched.”

Committee comments. Just as AB 1326 (Arambula) adopted best practices cited by the Governor’s Council for Post-Secondary Education, AB 2150 (Arambula) also would fulfill a recommendation from the second report published by the Governor’s Council for Post-Secondary Education. The council published a report, “Intersegmental Working Group on

Student Basic Needs,” which included recommendations for how the public higher education institutions could increase student’s awareness and access to basic needs supports.⁴ Two of the recommendations, including providing training to staff on the available basic needs supports and building regional partnerships between basic needs practitioners and county government staff, are fulfilled by AB 2150 (Arambula).

To ensure basic needs coordinators are included in the working group and to align the reporting requirements with other basic needs reporting requirements in the Education Code, the Committee has suggested and the author has accepted the following amendments:

- 1) Amends Section 10006 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, subdivision (d), paragraph (3), subparagraph (A), clause (ii) as follows:

(ii) At least four college campus basic needs ~~directors or other designated~~ *directors, basic needs coordinators*, or other designated campus staff from multiple regions and campuses.

- 2) Amends Section 10006 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, subdivision (d), paragraph (5), subparagraph (A), as follows:

(5) (A) On or before ~~June 30, May 1, 2026~~, *May 1, 2026*, and every three years thereafter, in collaboration with stakeholders identified pursuant to this section, submit a report to the Legislature with findings and recommendations relating to enrollment success trends and services offered by the department that may be available to students attending a campus of an institution of public higher education.

Related legislation.

- 1) AB 2033 (Reyes) of 2024, requires the CCC and the CSU and requests the UC to implement various programs and tools, as defined to help students access basic needs on- and off-campus.

Committee staff note AB 2033 (Reyes) would expand the definition of basic needs coordinators to include coordinators at the CSU and UC. The Author may wish to expand the definition of basic needs coordinator to include the definitions of AB 2033 prior to the bills being signed into law.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of Food Banks
 California Competes: Higher Education for A Strong Economy
 California State University, Office of The Chancellor
 California Student Aid Commission
 Center for Healthy Communities At California State University, Chico
 Central California Food Bank
 Community Action Partnership of Orange County

⁴ https://careereducation.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2022/03/Intersegmental-Basic-Needs-Working-Group-RecommendationsResources_FINAL.pdf

Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
Faculty Association of California's Community Colleges
Food for People, the Food Bank for Humboldt County
Food in Need of Distribution Food Bank
Food Share
GenUp (Generation Up)
Glide
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
San Diego Food Bank
San Diego Hunger Coalition
San Jose-evergreen Community College District
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
Uaspire
Western Center on Law & Poverty
Westside Food Bank

Opposition

County Welfare Directors Association of California

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