

Date of Hearing: June 18, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

SB 1183 (Hurtado) – As Introduced February 14, 2024

**SENATE VOTE:** 39-0

**SUBJECT:** Community colleges: registered nursing programs

**SUMMARY:** Adds “living in a medically underserved area or population area” to the criteria for consideration under the multicriteria screening tool for impacted nursing programs at community colleges and extends the sunset date for the nursing program multicriteria screening tool to January 1, 2030. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Adds “living in a medically underserved area or population”, as defined, to the “life experiences or special circumstances” section of the multicriteria screening tool used by impacted nursing programs at community college districts to select applicants for enrollment.
- 2) Defines “medically underserved area or population” as areas or populations designated by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration.
- 3) Extends the availability of the multicriteria screening tool by five years, until January 1, 2030.
- 4) Makes clarifying and technical amendments.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Stipulates that if a community college registered nursing program is impacted, the nursing program may select which students to admit through the following methods:
  - a) A multicriteria screening tool that will apply measures of evaluation in accordance with the following:
    - i) The criteria applied in a multicriteria screening tool will include, but is not limited to:
      - (1) Academic degrees or diplomas, held by an applicant;
      - (2) Grade-point average in relevant coursework;
      - (3) Any relevant work or volunteer experience;
      - (4) Life experiences or special circumstances of the applicants as defined;
      - (5) Proficiency in advance level coursework in languages other than English, as defined;
    - ii) Additional criteria such as a personal interview, a personal statement, a letter of recommendation, or a number of repetitions of prerequisite classes may be included but are not required; and,

- iii) Additional criteria may include the use of a diagnostic test.
- b) A random selection process; and,
- c) A blend of a random selection process or a multicriteria screening.

Requires a community college that uses a multicriteria screening to report its nursing program admission policies to the Chancellor of the CCC annually, in writing. The policy will include how each criteria is factored into the college's decision in terms of admission.

Requires the Chancellor's Office of the CCC to submit a report on or before March 1, 2015, and by March 1 each year thereafter that examines the following:

- a) The participation, retention, and completion rates in a community college registered nursing program of students admitted through a multicriteria screening as described, disaggregated by the age, gender, ethnicity, and language spoken at the home of the students admitted;
- b) Information on the annual impact, if any, of the Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act had on the matriculation services for students, admitted through the multicriteria screening.

Permits the above report to be submitted annually in conjunction with another report on nursing programs.

Repeals all of the above on January 1, 2025, unless another statute extends the date (Education Code Section 78261.5).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Joint Rule 28.8, the measure has negligible state costs.

**COMMENTS:** *Need for the measure.* As stated by the author, "SB 1183 seeks to address disparities in access to nursing education by acknowledging and accommodating the unique circumstances faced by individuals residing in medically underserved areas or populations, while also ensuring continued access to nursing education opportunities beyond the existing sunset date. I've had the privilege of hearing the stories of individuals whose dreams of becoming nurses have been hindered by systemic barriers. Through conversations with aspiring nurses from medically underserved areas, I've come to understand the challenges they face—limited access to quality healthcare, educational resources, and opportunities for advancement. We're opening doors that were once closed, paving the way for a more diverse and inclusive healthcare workforce that reflects the communities it serves. Extending the provisions until 2030 is more than just a legislative decision; it's a commitment to the future of healthcare in California. It's a promise to generations of aspiring nurses that their dreams are valid and achievable, regardless of where they come from or the challenges they've overcome. With SB 1183, we're not just addressing healthcare workforce shortages; we're building a brighter, more equitable future for all Californians."

*Nursing programs at the California Community Colleges (CCC).* The California Board of Registered Nursing authorizes three pathways that a student may complete a pre-licensure nursing program, of which only one is available at the community colleges, the associate degree

in nursing. To become a licensed vocational nurse, a student must complete two to three years of course work at one of the 77 community colleges that offer a nursing program.<sup>1</sup> Of the 77 community colleges offering nursing degrees, 53 use the multicriteria screening tool to help determine which applicant should be admitted due to impaction.<sup>1</sup>

Impaction occurs when there is more applicants than slots available for students to receive academic instruction. Due to a high-volume of applicants and a lack of clinical placements, almost every nursing program at the CCC is impacted. A recent article by CalMatters found that the wait list for Ventura College is four and half years.<sup>2</sup> To address impaction and to ensure candidates who enter the program have the greatest likelihood of becoming nurses, the Legislature required the CCC to introduce a multicriteria screening through the passing of AB 1559 (Berryhill), Chapter 712, Statute of 2007.

Prior to AB 1559 (Berryhill), the Board of Governors had established a prohibition on merit-based criteria in response to equity concerns. A local CCC district could only introduce a merit-based screening tool for nursing applicants, if the CCC district had conducted research to ensure the admission's criteria was implemented in a manner that did not disproportionately impact a particular group of students. Due to the restrictive regulations and emphases on data analyses, community college districts elected to use lotteries and first-come, first serve wait lists for admission to the nursing programs. An unintended consequence of this action was the turning away of qualified nursing students as well as higher than expected drop-out rates ultimately resulting in a nursing workforce shortage.

To address impaction and to reduce the dropout rates, AB 1559 (Berryhill) codified a multicriteria screening tool that permitted community colleges the ability to screen and admit potential candidates by taking into account the student's lived experiences along with their academic qualifications. The criteria for the screening tool is listed in the existing law section of this analysis.

Each year, the Chancellor's Office is required to publish data on the outcomes of students who enroll in nursing programs in order to determine whether the multicriteria screening tool is fulfilling its intended goals of:

- 1) Increasing successful completion rates of the program:
- 2) Producing qualified nursing candidates who pass the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX); and,
- 3) Increasing the diversity of qualified nursing candidates in the State of California.

As previously mentioned 53 community colleges use the multicriteria screening tool to select their nursing students from waitlist. The colleges using multicriteria screening had a 91.5% completion rate, which is higher than programs who use a different admission process. Community colleges who utilize the multicriteria screening tool also have greater diversity among candidates when compared with colleges who elect to use a different selection process.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/nursing-allied-health/2021-22-multicriteria-selection-process-update-2-26-24-a11y.pdf?la=en&hash=50DE437EDC35611A102689F27A1F0B573BC703A6>

<sup>2</sup> <https://calmatters.org/education/higher-education/college-beat/2023/03/california-nursing-school/>

By all data points, the multicriteria screening is having the intended effect of increasing diversity and ensuring students are successfully completing the nursing programs. SB 1183 (Hurtado) would extend the ability for community colleges to use the multicriteria screening tool until 2030 and would add another criteria for consideration, whether the student is living in a medically underserved area of population.

*Medically underserved area or population as designated by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration.* The federal Health Resources and Services Administration (administration) defines a “medically underserved area” as a geographic area, such as a county, that lacks access to primary care services. Whereas a “medically underserved population”, is a shortage of primary health care for a specific population within a geographic area. The population may face economic, cultural, or language barriers to healthcare. Populations who fall into the category of medically underserved populations include low-income individuals, the homeless, and migrant farm workers.

In the federal database containing the underserved areas and population, only three California Counties are not represented as containing either an medically underserved area or a medically underserved population.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the counties listed have medically underserved areas or specific regions within the county that are considered medically underserved areas. For a few regions in California the entire county qualifies. Other counties only had specific populations that received the designation of medically underserved population. The data contained in the federal database included data from the early 1990s through 2018.<sup>3</sup>

Based on the language of SB 1183 (Hurtado) one can reasonably understand that as long as the student was living in an area or in the county with the specific population designation as listed in the database, then the student would receive an additional consideration where as a student not living in the area or in the county with the specific designation would not.

*Arguments in support.* The California Community College Chancellor’s Office states the need for SB 1183 because, “while multicriteria screening has resulted in greater diversity of students admitted into our nursing programs, some parts of the state continue to face barriers to accessing quality health care. Students from these regions may offer a unique perspective that could help serve their local communities. SB 1183 would allow, for another five years, community college nursing programs to continue to enroll students with a diverse range of professional and life experiences. Today, 53 of 77 of community college nursing programs have implemented multicriteria screening. These students are more likely to persist, graduate, and complete licensure requirements. SB 1183 also retains the focus on equity by allowing nursing programs to consider whether a student resides in a medically underserved area. I thank you for your leadership on this vitally important issue.”

*Committee comments.* In the current legislative year, there are three bills moving through the legislative process that address the multicriteria screening tool. AB 1891 (Weber) of 2024, would extend the multicriteria screening tool to the allied health programs at the CCC and would add “the various languages from the African continent” to the list of criteria under proficiency in a language other than English. AB 1891 (Weber) has been referred to the suspense file in the Senate Appropriations Committee and passed out of this Committee with a vote of 10-0.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/mua-find>

AB 2532 (Mathis) would extend the sunset for the nursing program multicriteria screening tool to 2030 and would establish the criteria of “being a resident of the community college district” as a factor to be considered for enrollment. AB 2532 (Mathis) is awaiting a hearing in the Senate Education Committee and passed out of this Committee with a vote of 10-0.

The authors of AB 2532 (Mathis) and SB 1183 (Hurtado) share intent for the changes to the multi-criteria screening tool to provide additional “points” or consideration for local students over non-local students. EDC Section 78261.3 states, a community college district is not permitted to adopt a policy, procedure, or system that would permit a local applicant priority over a nonlocal applicant. The intention of this section is to preserve the open enrollment policy of the community colleges. SB 1183 (Hurtado) would provide additional points to local students during the application process while also preserving the open enrollment policy of the community colleges. SB 1183 (Hurtado) uses data from a federal agency whose primary mission is to “provide equitable health care to the nation’s highest needs communities.”<sup>4</sup>

To align the bill with AB 1891 (Weber) so that the multicriteria screening tools for both allied health programs and nursing programs are identical, the Committee has proposed, and the author has accepted, amendments to add “the various languages from the African continent” to the criteria for the multicriteria screening tool for nursing program. The proposed amendment is as follows:

(E) Proficiency or advanced level coursework in languages other than English. Credit for languages other than English shall be received for languages that are identified by the chancellor as high-frequency languages, as based on census data. These languages may include, but are not necessarily limited to, any of the following:

- (i) American Sign Language.
- (ii) Arabic.
- (iii) Chinese, including its various dialects.
- (iv) Farsi.
- (v) Russian.
- (vi) Spanish.
- (vii) Tagalog.
- (viii) The various languages of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.
- (ix) *The various languages of the African continent.*

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hrsa.gov/>

Adventist Health System West  
Altura Centers for Health  
American Nurses Association/california  
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office  
College of The Sequoias  
Porterville Chamber of Commerce  
San Jose-evergreen Community College District  
Sierra View Medical Center  
West Hills College District

**Opposition**

None on file.

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