

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
Mike Fong, Chair  
AB 79 (Arambula) – As Amended March 24, 2025

**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 health and human service agencies. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Adds basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, or designated basic needs staff from each campus of a CCC, CSU, and UC to the list of entities a county human service agency must receive input from when developing protocols for engaging with the CCC, CSU, or UC campus within the county.
- 2) Requires the CDSS to do the following:
  - a) Develop a training for basic needs directors, staff of a campus basic needs center, designated staff, and eligibility workers on higher education institution campuses. The training will be developed in consultation with county health and human services agency staff liaison, basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, and designated basic needs staff. The training developed will focus on the following social services topics:
    - i) Local programs that increase employability (LPIE);
    - ii) State Department of Health Care Services and CDSS updates; including a review of the CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook;
    - iii) Other college student related training, including information on financial aid, scholarships, dependent status, eligibility criteria for public social service programs, and other information related to the needs of college students.
  - b) Convene a workgroup to share best practices, address challenges, and identify statewide issues. The workgroup will convene every four months and will include the following people/groups:
    - i) At least 12 county staff liaisons, including two county staff liaisons from each of the six regions of the California Statewide Automated Welfare System consortium;
    - ii) At least four college campus basic needs directors, basic needs coordinators, or other designated campus staff from multiple regions and campuses;
    - iii) At least one representative from the office of the Chancellor of CSU;
    - iv) At least one representative from the office of the Chancellor of the CCC;

- v) At least one representative from the Office of the President of the UC, if provided as requested.
  - vi) A representative from the Center for Healthy Communities at Chico State University,
  - vii) Any relevant stakeholders as needed to share best practices, updates, challenges, or other topics related to programs and services offered by CDSS for college students.
- c) Submit a report to the Legislature by May 1, 2027 and every three years thereafter, on the findings and recommendations relating to enrollment success trends, best practices, and social services offered by CDSS for college students. The report will be produced in collaboration with the stakeholders identified above and the report will be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.
- 3) Defines for purposes of the section amended by the measure, “basic needs coordinator” to mean the basic needs coordinator at either a CCC or CSU.
- 4) States if the Commission on State Mandates determines there is a cost associated with the implementation of the measure, the State will reimburse local agencies and school districts for the determined cost.
- 5) Makes Legislative findings and declarations as it relates to the basic needs of students. The findings and declarations include:
- 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.
- 6) 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 a higher education institution from qualifying for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, unless the

individual qualifies for an exception, as specified (7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 273.5(a)).

- 2) Clarifies that a student enrolled in a higher education institution 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 (TANF) 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 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.).
- 2) Establishes 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) Establishes by July 1, 2025, Basic Needs Centers and the position of a Basic Needs Coordinator at CSU campuses to provide students with single point of contact for on-and off-campus basic needs services, as defined (EDC Section 66023.4).

- 4) 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 (California's administration program for SNAP), including the eligibility requirements, during campus orientation (EDC Section 66027.4).
- 5) 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).
- 6) Requires the CSU and CCC and requests the UC to collaborate with county human service agencies to conduct a survey to determine the effectiveness of the county liaison positions and provides the parameters for specific data points to be included in the survey. The outcome of the survey is to be published in a report and provided to the Legislature, as defined, by January 1, 2025 (EDC Section 66027.9).
- 7) 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.).
- 8) Requires a county health and 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 10006).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Double referral.* AB 79 (Arambula) was heard in the Assembly Committee on Human Services on March 11, 2024, where it passed with a 6-0 vote on Consent. A review of the impact of the measure would have on CDSS and county health and human services agency 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 in 2021 to create a county liaison of higher education to help students navigate these challenges. The AB 1326 report confirms a clear lack of coordination across the state and provides key recommendations to enhance collaboration between campuses and county agencies. To ensure that all students receive support, regardless of where they attend

university, AB 79 establishes a statewide network of basic needs coordinators and county liaisons of higher education to share best practices.”

*Basic needs insecurities among 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.<sup>1</sup> The survey indicated that student’s food and housing insecurities had increased by more than 25% since the 2018-2019 academic year.

In May 2024, the Chancellor’s Office of the CCC published the latest version of the Basic Needs Services Center Report, which contained an update on the CCC compliance with SB 132 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 144, Statutes of 2021. Each of the 115 brick and mortar CCC have a basic needs center which provides services to students and 80 college campuses provided data on basic needs services for the report. Across the 80 colleges, 64,429 students accessed basic needs services through their college’s basic needs center, with nearly half of the students receiving food services and 3,813 students receiving housing services.<sup>2</sup>

On April 4, 2025, the CSU Chancellor’s Office published a statutorily required report on “Student Mental Health and Basic Needs Initiatives Report for the 2023-2024 academic year.”<sup>3</sup> Across all 23 CSU campuses in the 2023-2024 academic year, 79,392 students received food services, 35,962 student were assisted with completing a CalFresh application, and 1,735 students were provided housing support.<sup>5</sup>

The UC Office of the President is also statutorily required to provide an annual report on “Basic Needs, Mental Health, and Repaid Rehousing,” which was published on February 1, 2025. The report found campus basic needs efforts served 73,623 students between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024.<sup>4</sup> In March 2025, the UC published the “Basic Needs Annual Report to the UC Regents of the UC.”<sup>5</sup> The report included data on the basic needs programs across all UC campuses and highlighted that 40,593 UC students accessed a campus-based food pantry and 17, 291 UC students submitted a CalFresh application.

*AB 1326 (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.<sup>6</sup> The report indicated increasing the collaborative relationships between CDSS, the county health and human services agency, and the public higher education institutions would help increase the number of participating students in the CalFresh program.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.csac.ca.gov/node/2496>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCO-Website/docs/report/2024-basic-needs-services-centers-report-all.pdf?la=en&hash=9FE9919ED4CB05B2BFDA847DFD37F6B66BBE1A3E>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/government/Advocacy-and-State-Relations/legislativereports1/Mental-Health-and-Basic-Needs-Legislative-Report-2025-Signed.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ucop.edu/operating-budget/\\_files/legreports/2024-25/uc\\_basic\\_needs\\_mental\\_health\\_rapid\\_rehousing\\_legislative\\_report.pdf](https://www.ucop.edu/operating-budget/_files/legreports/2024-25/uc_basic_needs_mental_health_rapid_rehousing_legislative_report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/regmeet/mar25/b3attach.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Leg/202006-SB-77-CalFresh-Student-Data-Report.pdf>

In addition to CalFresh, qualifying college students can receive additional assistance from a variety of social service programs offered by the local county health and human services agency including mental health services, health insurance coverage, housing assistance, and funding for childcare. However, college students are often unaware they qualify for the services offered or are deterred by the encumbered process of applying for services. 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."<sup>7</sup> 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 health and human services agency to have one liaison to serve as the point of contact for campuses of the CCC, CSU, and UC within the county to help facilitate access to social services for students on campus.

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 to help students gain access to the social service programs offered by the county health and human services agency. 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

The higher education institutions immediately felt the impacts of having designated county-level employees to assist students in accessing social services. Both the CCC and CSU attributed the increase in access to CalFresh and housing services to the partnership between the institutions and the county liaisons.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to establishing the requirement for county liaisons and protocols for engagement between the county health and human services agency and the public higher education institutions, AB 1326 (Arambula) required the public higher education institutions to conduct a survey on the effectiveness of the measure. Conducted by the Center for Health Communities at Chico State University, in collaboration with county health and human services agencies, the survey's findings were published in a report provided to the Legislature in December 2024.

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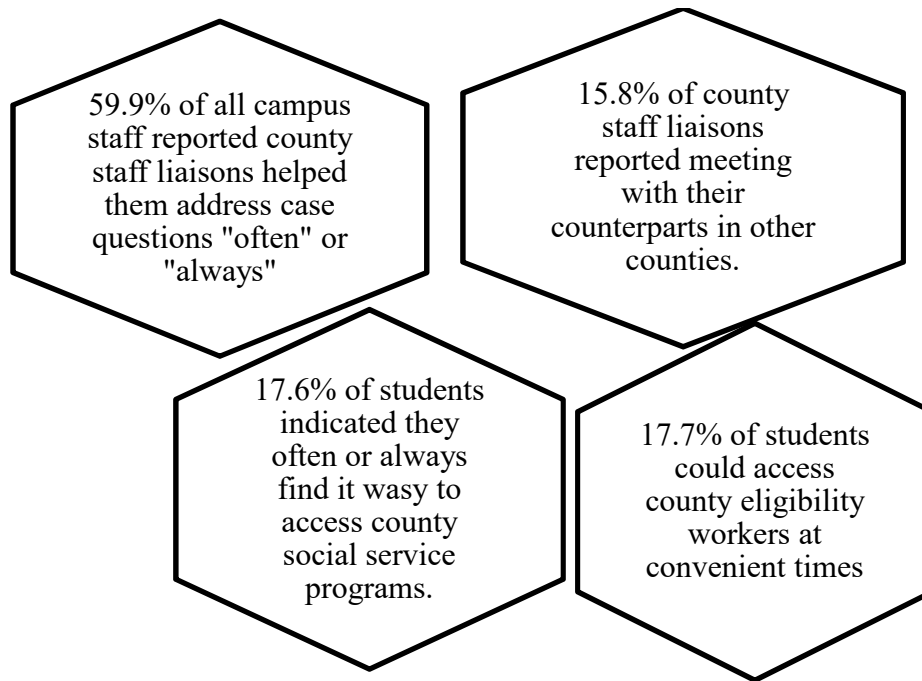
<sup>7</sup> <https://careereducation.gov.ca.gov/RecoveryWithEquity.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACLs/2022/22-48.pdf?ver=2022-06-10-132408-930>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACINs/2022/I-85\\_22.pdf?ver=2023-01-12-105458-567](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACINs/2022/I-85_22.pdf?ver=2023-01-12-105458-567)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ccleague.org/news/basic-needs-report-identifies-continued-lack-of-food-and-housing-security-among-california-community-college-students/> and <https://www.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/government/Advocacy-and-State-Relations/legislative-reports1/Mental-Health-and-Basic-Needs-Legislative-Report-2025-Signed.pdf>

AB 1326 (Arambula) Report by Center for Healthy Communities at CSU Chico.<sup>11</sup> The AB 1326 survey included a wide representation from across the state. The survey found:



In addition to providing the survey results, the report provided key recommendations for how the State could improve student access to basic needs services offered by county health and human service agencies by:

- 1) Establishing clear partnership guidelines and foster consistent coordination through structured meetings;
- 2) Expanding staffing capacity in high-student population areas to help further ensure effective and consistent campus-county partnerships;
- 3) Identifying specific campus staff to work with county staff liaisons to improve communication and coordination;
- 4) Providing targeted college student eligibility trainings; and,
- 5) Promoting consistent outreach strategies.

AB 79 (Arambula) would implement many of the recommendations including establishing and providing consistent meetings between CDSS, county staff liaisons, and public higher education institutions, providing specified trainings to staff to maximize awareness of social service programs available to students, and specifies the type campus staff who will collaborate with county liaisons to enhance greater access to social services.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://csuchico.box.com/shared/static/j1x7c87jtq87c4xkmnncetjp5yirhu5q.pdf>

By providing trainings, coordinated meetings, and enhanced collaboration, the desired outcome of AB 79 (Arambula) would be to streamline access to social services for college students by forging a path of partnerships between the systems of CDSS and public higher education institutions. By removing the labyrinth social service process by making access to social services more student centric, the hope would be to increase the retention of students who otherwise may have to choose between full-time work and their education.

*Arguments in support.* As stated by the UC Office of the President, “all 10 UC campuses have a basic needs center with staff to provide critical resources with the goal of ensuring equitable and successful academic completion for our students. AB 79 would support this mission by providing the opportunity for our basic needs staff to work in collaboration with county health agencies and potentially reduce the barriers that our students face in accessing critical resources, such as CalFresh. For these reasons, the University supports AB 79.”

According to the Western Center on Law and Poverty, “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. In a new study by UCLA Center for Healthy Policy Research, they found that among food-insecure students, almost half have never used CalFresh and 9% had never heard of the program. This is especially troublesome given California’s status as the state that provides the most funding for these programs. We know AB 79 will address this by improving the experiences of students in need and the community of social services.”

As co-sponsors, the California Association of Food Banks, Center for healthy communities, Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Michelson Center for Public Policy, and UAspire support the measure as, “California has invested in policies, tools, and staff that set the foundation for this work; we must fully build on this as students continue to face hunger and homelessness and participation rates among public benefits remain low. This state has led the way for student success and nourishment, and helping with basic needs is a proven model for individual and community success. Passing Assembly Bill 79 only requires little funding for ongoing maintenance costs. The costs are small compared to the dollars the state will save considering AB 79 will help maximize federal and state investments in higher education, support state college completion goals and positive employment outcomes, and reduce reliance on public benefits in the future. Additionally, AB 79 will support the governor’s California for All mission, the idea that every person can achieve a better life, regardless of where they start, and improve Californians’ long-term economic and social outcomes.”

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Alliance for Children's Rights  
California Alliance of Caregivers  
California Association of Food Banks  
California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy  
California State University, Office of the Chancellor  
Center for Healthy Communities at California State University, Chico



Central California Food Bank  
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations  
Community Action Partnership of Orange County  
Community Foodbank of San Benito  
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC) Fiscally Sponsored by Community Partners  
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges  
Feeding San Diego  
Food for People, the Food Bank for Humboldt County  
Glide  
Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank  
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank  
Los Angeles United Methodist Foundation  
Michelson Center for Public Policy  
NextGen California  
Northern California College Promise Coalition  
Placer Food Bank  
Public Advocates, Inc.  
San Diego Hunger Coalition  
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank  
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District  
Schoolhouse Connection  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County  
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley  
Student Homes Coalition  
uAaspire  
University of California  
University of California Student Association  
Western Center on Law & Poverty  
Youth Leadership Institute

**Opposition**

None on file.

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