

Date of Hearing: July 8, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

SB 271 (Reyes) – As Amended May 23, 2025

[Note: This bill is double referred to the Assembly Committee on Human Services and will be heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: students with dependent children: childcare services, resources, and programs.

SUMMARY: Requires each California State University (CSU) and California Community College (CCC), and requests each University of California (UC) financial aid office, childcare development center, and basic needs center to refer their respective students with dependent children to local resource and referral agencies, and each other for purposes of connecting and informing students of existing childcare services and resources. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires each CCC and CSU and requests each UC financial aid office to provide all of the following to students with dependent children:
 - a) Information on the campus' childcare development center and childcare offerings, if applicable;
 - b) Referral to the campus Basic Needs Centers for support accessing information, including but not limited to, information and connections to local resource and referral agencies in order to obtain support in applying for state and federal childcare subsidies and programs and finding local childcare providers; and,
 - c) Information on any supplemental awards, such as the awards for those students with dependent children, as specified.
- 2) Requires each CCC and CSU, and requests each UC child development center or preschool established pursuant to state law for higher education institutions, to provide students with dependent children seeking childcare with both of the following:
 - a) Referral to the campus Basic Needs Center for support accessing information, including but not limited to, information and connections to local resource and referral agencies in order to obtain support in applying for state and federal childcare subsidies and programs and finding local childcare providers; and,
 - b) Referral to the campus' financial aid office, including information on the awards for students with dependent children.
- 3) Expands the definition of basic needs services and resources that a basic needs coordinator and Basic Needs Center on a CCC, CSU, or UC campus is to be responsible for, to include

childcare services and resources. These resources may include direct financial or service support. Specifies that if a campus has an existing center or office that supports parenting students and a student may be better served there, the basic needs center is authorized to direct that student to that center or office.

- 4) Adds supplemental awards for students with dependent children as a reason a Basic Needs Center on a CCC, CSU, or UC campus refers a student to the financial aid department or office.
- 5) Expands the definition of childcare services and resources, as it relates to basic needs services, resources, and centers to include, but is not limited to, providing information on affordable childcare options on or near the campus, and information and connections to local resource and referral agencies in order to obtain support in applying to state and federal childcare subsidies and programs, and finding local childcare providers, including but not limited to, the California State preschool program, Head Start, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) childcare program, and general child care and development programs. Childcare services and resources may also include direct financial or service support.

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 each CCC campus and each CSU campus, and requests each UC campus, to establish the position of the Basic Needs Coordinator to assist students, in part, with basic needs services and resources, including childcare, and to establish a Basic Needs Center where basic needs services, resources, and staff are made available to students, as provided. Existing law requires each Basic Needs Center to, in part, connect students to the financial aid department or financial aid office, as appropriate, to ensure that students are receiving all available financial aid (EC Sections 66023.4 and 66023.5).
- 3) 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).
- 4) 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).
- 5) Establishes the Greater Accessibility, Information, Notice, and Support (GAINS) for Student Parents Act; requires the CCC Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and the CSU Chancellor's Office and requests the UC President's Office, by July 31, 2025, to develop and disseminate a model policy to estimate and adjust college cost of attendance (COA) information for student

parents. It further requires each campus of the CCC and the CSU and requests each campus of the UC to take various steps to adjust the cost of attendance for student parents. Lastly, existing law requires certain information related to benefits for student parents to be included on college and university webpages (EC Section 66027.82).

- 6) Establishes the supplemental Cal Grant award, administered by the California Student Aid Commission, for students with dependent children who attend a CSU, UC, CCC, or independent nonprofit college or university receiving a Cal Grant A, B, or C award. Eligible Cal Grant A or B students may receive an additional \$6,000, and \$4,000 for Cal Grant C recipients (EC Section 69465 (a)-(h), inclusive).

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) The Chancellor's Office estimates one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs of \$1,000 to \$2,000 per community college, or \$116,000 to \$232,000 statewide, to update policies and procedures for Basic Needs Centers and Financial Aid Offices. However, this estimate could be lower since the bill's provisions would merely codify current practices already in place at some of the colleges.
- 2) While the CSU and UC indicate that the bill's provisions would result in additional training duties for their Basic Needs Coordinators and Financial Aid staff, the associated costs are expected to be minor and absorbable within existing resources.

COMMENTS: *Need for the measure.* According to the author, "there are more than 400,000 student parents in California, an estimated 32% of which have a child under the age of three. Currently, the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC) systems, are required to have Basic Need Centers and coordinators to provide 'basic needs services and resources' to students on campus. This includes, but is not limited to, housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, childcare, and mental health services and resources."

The author states that, "in recent years, California has made strides to support the growing number of student parents, recognizing the additional barriers they face to accessing and completing postsecondary education. However, significant challenges remain. Access to and knowledge of resources is persistently a challenge. Many student parents seeking support at various offices on campus are not informed of the full scope of services they are eligible for."

Further, the author contends that, "SB 271 requires that when a student parent on a higher education campus is identified at one of the following campus locations: a financial aid office, a child development center, or a basic need center, the student parent shall be notified about the childcare and financial aid resources available to them. The bill also ensures student parents are connected to childcare support services provided in their county. This type of direct notification process is needed because student parents are hindered by the communications silos within higher education campuses."

Lastly, according to the author, "while juggling the demands of parents and earning their degrees, student parents should not be further delayed by communication gaps on their campuses. SB 271 bridges gaps, ensuring student parents are connected to the resources they

need rather than being left in the dark about relevant services. This bill is a step towards making all student parents feel welcomed, supported, and cared for by fostering an environment where their needs are intentionally met.”

How many? 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 COA. Federal regulations allow financial aid administrators to adjust a student's COA to include the expenses incurred for dependent care, however, institutions often do not take full advantage of this federal flexibility.

On-going efforts to assist students with dependents. Student parents attending a campus of the State's public higher education institutions have access to various resources and services designed to support their needs, including child care programs. Systemwide at the CCC, of the 72 brick and mortar community college districts, 20 operate 42 child care centers. Systemwide, of the 23 campuses of the CSU, 20 have childcare centers, and all of the nine undergraduate campuses of the UCs have child care centers.

However, enrollment capacity varies. Consistently, centers have waitlists for parents seeking to enroll their children. As it relates to financial aid, eligible student parents at any of the three public systems of higher education can receive a supplemental award, up to \$6,000, on top of their Cal Grant award. Additionally, on-campus basic needs centers established to address basic needs insecurity among college students, assist any student with basic needs services and resources, including childcare, food, and housing assistance.

In addition to the campus based resources for students with dependents, resource and referral programs, funded by the California Department of Social Services, Child Care and Development Division, help families find child care that best meets their needs, recruit and train child care providers, and collect data from parents and child care providers. Resource and referral programs provide information to all parents and the community about the availability of child care in their area. Said programs assist potential providers in the licensing process, provide direct services, including training, and coordinate community resources for the benefit of parents and local child care providers. Every county in California is served by at least one resource and referral agency.

As noted above, a variety of services and resources are available to students with dependents, but often times, student parents are not aware of the various resources and services they could benefit from. In fact, according to a 2024 policy brief by Early Edge California, entitled, *Supporting Student Parents and their Young Children in California's Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)*, the academic success of student parents enrolled in higher education and the well-being of their young children are heavily influenced by the level of institutional support available to them. The policy brief found that the availability or lack of child care options and resources on campus impacts families raising infants and toddlers - who are going through their most critical period of development.

Additionally, the policy brief indicated that by identifying the diverse needs and addressing unique challenges faced by students with dependents, IHEs can foster the educational success,

economic mobility, and well-being of both parents and young children in a two-generational approach.

This measure appears to improve communication among campus locations that offer benefits or support the needs of student parents. Further, this measure seeks to ensure student parents are aware of State-funded services designed to help any parent find child care in their area.

Arguments in support. According to the Western Center on Law & Poverty, “unfortunately, students are not always aware of the resources available to them as illustrated in a report by Early Edge which found that a lack of information on childcare resources and financial aid was a major contributor to student parents not continuing their education. By supporting student parents, we are supporting two generations at a time which will lead to healthy outcomes for the parents, children and our communities.”

Prior legislation. AB 2033 (Reyes), Chapter 913, Statutes of 2024, which, in part, requires the CCC and the CSU, and requests the UC to implement various programs and tools, as defined, to help students access basic needs resources on- and off-campus.

AB 2458 (Berman), Chapter 962, Statutes of 2024, which, in part, establishes the GAINS for Student Parents Act.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Cal State Student Association
California Catholic Conference
California Child Care Resource and Referral Network
California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office
California Family Resource Association
California Legislative Women's Caucus
California State Student Association
California State University, Office of the Chancellor
California Student Aid Commission
California WIC Association
California Women's Law Center
Campaign for College Opportunity
Child Abuse Prevention Center and its Affiliates Safe Kids California, Prevent Child Abuse
California and the California Family Resource Association; the
Child Action, INC.
Child Care Resource Center
Children Now
Coast Community College District
Early Edge California
EdTrust - West
Faculty Association of California's Community Colleges
Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis

Michelson Center for Public Policy
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
UNITE-LA
University of California
University of California Student Association
Western Center on Law & Poverty

Opposition

None on file.

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