

Date of Hearing: March 17, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 1555 (Hadwick) – As Introduced January 8, 2026

SUBJECT: Community colleges: exemption from non-resident tuition fee: College of the Siskiyous

SUMMARY: Creates a limited exemption from non-resident tuition for certain out-of-state students attending the College of the Siskiyous (COS). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Exempts a student from the payment of the non-resident tuition fee if the student attends the COS and resides in one of the following designated counties in the neighboring State of Oregon:
 - a) Jackson;
 - b) Josephine; and,
 - c) Klamath.
- 2) Limits the number of students receiving this exemption to no more than 200 students per academic year.
- 3) Requires the governing board of the Siskiyou Joint Community College District (SJCCD) to adopt rules and regulations for determining the students' residence classification and to establish procedures for the appeal and review of residency determinations.
- 4) Makes legislative findings and declarations stating the need for a special statute applicable to the COS due to its geographic location near the Oregon State border.
- 5) Establishes that the bill may create a state-mandated local program by imposing additional administrative responsibilities on the SJCCD.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Community Colleges (CCC), a postsecondary education system in this state, under the administration of the Board of Governors (BOG); and, specifies that the CCC consist of community college districts (Education Code (EC) Section 70900).
- 2) Authorizes the CCC BOG to enter into an interstate attendance agreement with any statewide public agency of another state that is responsible for public institutions of postsecondary education providing the first two years of college instruction, and that is an agency of a state that is a member of Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) (EC Section 66801).
- 3) Authorizes a California Community College District (CCD) to admit non-resident students and requires that these students be charged a tuition fee that is twice the amount of the fee established for in-state resident students, with certain specified exemptions. State statute

prescribes a formula for the calculation of the non-resident fee. State law requires the non-resident tuition fee be increased to a level that is three times the amount of the fee established for in-state resident students (EC Section 76140).

- 4) Prohibits non-resident students from being reported as FTES for state apportionment purposes, except where: (1) the CCD has fewer than 1,500 FTES and is within 10 miles of another state and has a reciprocity agreement with that state or participates in WICHE; or, (2) if a CCD has between 1,501 and 3,000 FTES and is within 10 miles of another state and has a reciprocity agreement with that state or participates in WICHE, the CCD can claim up to 100 FTES for state apportionment purposes (EC Section 76140 (h)(i)).
- 5) Exempts no more than 200 students in any academic year from paying non-resident tuition fees if they attend the Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC) and reside in specified communities in the State of Nevada, and; (2) permits the LTCC District to count these persons as resident FTES for purposes of determining California apportionment funding (EC Section 76140 (a)(6)).
- 6) Exempts, until January 1, 2029, from the non-resident tuition fee, a non-resident, low-income student who is a resident of México, registers for lower division courses at specified community colleges near the California-México border, as defined, and resides within 45 miles of the California-México border (EC Section 76140 (a)(8)).
- 7) Provides that specified non-resident students exempted from paying non-resident tuition may be reported as resident FTES for purposes of state apportionment. These students are required to pay one and one-half the amount of resident fees (EC Section 76140 (j)).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Purpose of the measure.* According to the author, “the Northern Siskiyou communities interact daily with neighboring Oregon towns for work, healthcare, commerce, and schooling and vice versa. Many residents in Jackson, Josephine, and Klamath counties are a part of an interconnected cross border community.”

The author contends that, “the current tuition policies create financial barriers for these students, even though many live much closer to the College of the Siskiyous than any other public institution in their own state. Denying access to the College, simply because the state boundary cuts through the region, punishes our community for geography they do not control.”

Further, the author states that, “AB 1555 addresses this inequity by allowing up to 200 eligible students to qualify for in-state tuition. College of the Siskiyous is a uniquely structured as a CTE-heavy college with California-recognized firefighting, emergency medical services, law enforcement and nursing. Attracting Oregon students trained at the College can help immediately fill critical workforce shortages in my rural communities in Northern California.”

Siskiyou County. Siskiyou County is located in inland northern California, adjacent to the Oregon State border. It is the fifth largest county in California by area. The COS has two campuses in Siskiyou County, one in the City of Weed and the other in the City of Yreka. The COS is the northernmost college in California and the only college in Siskiyou County. The COS is one of a small percentage of CCC campuses that provide on-campus housing for students.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). California and Oregon, along with a number of other states, participate in WICHE. The WICHE oversees three student reciprocal exchange programs allowing students to attend out of state colleges and universities at a reduced rate.

The COS participates in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the WICHE exchange program serving undergraduates, which is a tuition savings program that makes attending out-of-state colleges and universities more affordable for students in the West. Through WUE, qualifying students receive a reduced out-of-state tuition rate, making college more affordable. Further, through WUE, participating two- and four-year public colleges and universities across the West agree to charge out-of-state students no more than 150% of the institution's in-state rate. Tuition savings vary by school and/or major, but participating students can save tuition expenses with WUE.

Reciprocity agreements. The COS currently has a reciprocity agreement in place with the State of Oregon. The Oregon Exchange Program allows COS to admit up to 50 eligible students who are Oregon residents to attend COS at a discounted rate, rather than paying the full out-of-state tuition. This reciprocity agreement also includes in-state tuition to eligible California residents attending COS and seeking to transfer to and attend Southern Oregon University or Oregon Institute of Technology.

The author states, "it is important to note that this bill is not merely absorbing the cost of enrolling non-resident Oregon students. California and Oregon have preexisting 'good neighbor' policies which results in an essentially zero-sum fiscal effect to each state. Oregon enrolls California students at a reduced cost. California therefore can enroll Oregon students at a reduced cost. Students are not only more likely to go to college that they live near; they are also more likely to live near the college they attended. Attracting Oregon students to California who already live in and near the region will only better serve California."

Cross-border community college access. Students living in neighboring Oregon counties may reside closer to the COS than to any Oregon institution of higher education. By allowing a limited number of these students to receive a non-resident tuition exemption, this measure seeks to improve access to postsecondary education and workforce training in rural border communities.

Limitation on participation. To limit fiscal and enrollment impacts and align with existing law for other regions with this allowance, this measure caps participation in the exemption program at 200 students per academic year. This provision appears intended to balance expanded access for nearby residents while maintaining the primary mission of serving California residents.

Committee comments and amendments. The language in print appears to have a drafting error. In order to correct this error, *the Committee recommends, and the author has agreed to accept, the following amendment:*

Sec. 4: The Legislature finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable within the meaning of Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution because of the ~~because of the~~ unique circumstances of College of the Siskiyous with respect to students who reside in nearby counties located in Oregon.

Arguments in support. According to COS, sponsors of this measure, “the border region of Siskiyou County and Southern Oregon functions as a singular, bi-state community where residents cross state lines daily for essential services. Given that 90% of community college students stay within a 50-mile radius of home, Siskiyou is uniquely positioned to fill workforce gaps that neighboring Oregon institutions currently cannot. By enrolling Oregon students in its specialized Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement, and Nursing programs, Siskiyou can directly address critical regional shortages, most notably in emergency medical training. Strengthening these pipelines not only bolsters the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection but also enhances California’s overall climate resiliency.”

Prior legislation. AB 91 (Alvarez), Chapter 796, Statutes of 2023, exempts, until January 1, 2029, from the non-resident tuition fee, a non-resident, low-income student who is a resident of México, registers for lower division courses at specified community colleges near the California-México border, as defined, and has residence within 45 miles of the California-México border.

AB 1998 (Simth), Chapter 495, Statutes of 2022, (1) authorizes the CCC BOG to enter into the WUE through WICHE; (2) allows small community college districts located near a bordering state to charge a lower tuition rate to out-of-state students from WUE participating states; and, (3) decreases the per-unit fee for eligible resident students from three to one and one-half times the amount established for resident students.

SB 436 (Dahle), Chapter 573, Statutes of 2021, removes the sunset date of provisions in current law, authorizing LTCC to waive non-resident tuition fees and claim apportionment for a limited number of students residing in specified communities in the State of Nevada (in the Lake Tahoe Basin), thereby making the authorization permanent.

SB 605 (Gaines), Chapter 657, Statutes of 2015, in part, until July 1, 2022, exempts persons residing in specified communities in the State of Nevada from paying non-resident tuition fees if they attend LTCC.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

College of the Siskiyous (Sponsor)

Opposition

None on file.

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