

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 775 (Berman) – As Amended March 23, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: basic needs of students

**SUMMARY:** Requires each campus of the California Community Colleges (CCC) by July 1, 2022 to establish a Basic Needs Coordinator and a Basic Needs Center for the purpose of providing basic needs services to students. Requires each campus of the CCC by February 1, 2022 to develop and make available to students a document which lists all on- and off-campus resources that offer basic needs assistance to students, as defined. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines “Basic needs services and resources” for purpose of this measure, to mean: housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, and mental health services and resources. Clarifies basic needs services and resources should not be limited to those listed.
- 2) Requires each campus of the CCC to do the following by July 1, 2022:
  - a) Establish and designate staff to fill the position of a Basic Needs Coordinator (coordinator), who will serve as the point of contact for students experiencing basic needs insecurity and will be a dedicated position solely focused on addressing the basic needs of students. The coordinator will act as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off- campus basic needs services and resources, as defined, and will oversee and coordinate with other staff, who address the basic needs of students, to inform students how to access these resources. Additionally, the coordinator will develop on- and off- campus partnerships to provide additional basic needs services and resources to students.
  - b) Establish a Basic Needs Center (center), as a central location on campus where basic needs services, resources, and staff are available to students. The intention of the center is to be a one-stop location for all basic needs services and resources provided to students for ease of access. Stipulates campuses are to make a reasonable effort to relocate all on – campus basic needs services or resources to the center and if the resources or services are not able to move, the campus will provide students with information of the location and contact information, as specified, of resources not available in the center. Tasks each center to ensure students have information required to enroll in CalFresh and other government benefits programs. Requires centers to coordinate with and connect students to the financial aid department on campus and the local community homelessness response system in order to ensure students are receiving financial aid and are accessing off-campus resources for housing. Clarifies that if a center already exists on campus, the center may be used and if needed expanded to satisfy the requirements as specified and requires the coordinator to be located in the center. Authorizes the center to assist students who are reasonably expected to enroll in the upcoming term and to provide support to students, who were either previously enrolled or are expected to enroll, during the summer and winter breaks
- 3) Authorizes campuses, to the extent possible, to utilize existing basic needs funds to provide emergency funds directly to students in need.

- 4) Requires each campus of the CCC, by February 1, 2022, to do the following:
  - a) Develop a document that lists all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources and includes the description, location, contact information and eligibility restriction of the service, as specified. Clarifies the document shall be reviewed and updated and made available online on both the campus's website via the student basic needs tab and the internet website-based student account, as defined, by the first day of every fall and spring of either the semester or quarter.
    - i) Requires the document to be made available to students as part of the campus's orientation either in electronic or paper form, in the center either in electronic, or paper form, and available online;
    - ii) Requires the document to be made available to faculty by an online link which also includes the location of the center and the contact information for the coordinator, and requires campuses to encourage faculty to include the information on their syllabi; and,
    - iii) Requires the document to be included on a student basic needs tab that is visible and easily accessible from a drop-down menu on the home page of the campus's website and requires campuses to create the student basic needs tab if one is not available. Requires the student basic needs tab and the internet website based student account to, once available, include information regarding the coordinator and the center.
  - b) Streamline the application and intake process for on-campus basic needs services and resources to minimize duplication and eliminate barriers to access. Develop and use a single application for on-campus resources.
  - c) Develop and implement a plan to identify and provide outreach to students, including nontraditional students, who have basic needs insecurities. Once established, the outreach will include information about the center and coordinator.
- 5) Requires each campus of the CCC to report to the CCC Chancellor's office the following information disaggregated by each basic needs services and resources and requires the CCC Chancellor's office to submit a report based on the following information every two years:
  - a) Description and number of basic needs services and resources, disaggregated by category;
  - b) The number of students served by the basic needs services and resources;
  - c) The socioeconomic and demographics of the students served;
  - d) The enrollment status of students who utilize the basic needs services and resources from each campus maintained by the district.
- 6) Establishes, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this bill contains cost mandated by the state, the state shall reimburse the applicable entities.
- 7) States legislative findings and declarations relating to the basic needs insecurities among college students including:

- a) The disproportionality of basic needs insecurity among some groups of students including: students of color, first-generation college students, financial aid recipients, former foster youth, and student parents;
- b) The direct impact basic needs insecurities have on a student's academic success;
- c) Best practices and tools for higher education institutions to utilize when building effective institutional supports for college students facing basic needs insecurities;
- d) Acknowledges the steps taken by the CCC to meet the basic needs of students through food pantries, housing-related efforts, and other services; and,
- e) Acknowledges that some community colleges who have moved towards a more coordinated and integrated approach in offering basic needs support to students.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the California Community Colleges (CCC) under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this State. The CCC shall be comprised of community college districts. (Education Code (EDC) Section 70900)
- 2) Establishes that CCC districts are under the control of a board of trustees, known as the governing board, who has the authority to establish, maintain, operate, and govern one or more community colleges, within its district as specified. (EDC Section 70902)
- 3) Requires each CCC campus that maintains student-housing facilities to provide priority housing to homeless youth, as defined and foster youth. Requires if the CCC campus maintains student housing facilities that are open on a year round basis or during school breaks, the priority housing be provided to foster youth and homeless youth at no extra cost to the student. Additionally each campus of the CCC to develop a plan to ensure that foster youth and homeless youth, as defined, have access to housing resources year-round. (EDC 76010)
- 4) Requires each campus of the CCC and the California State University (CSU), and requests each campus of the University of California (UC) to include on a website account for enrolled students, a notification of and a link to information on specified public services and programs, including the CalFresh program, county or local housing resources, as specified, and local or county mental health services (EDC Section 66027.6).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Need for the bill.* According to the author, "AB 775 follows research-based guidance and builds upon steps community colleges have taken to address students' basic needs. Specifically, this bill would establish a Basic Needs Center and a Basic Needs Coordinator at each campus, which would provide a single point of contact for community basic needs services and resources, especially during this challenging and unprecedented time. As campuses physically closed and moved to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, the existing basic needs challenges that students face, such as homelessness, housing insecurity, food

insecurity, and mental health, have become even more pronounced and urgently require coordinated action”.

*Prevalence of Basic Needs Insecurity.* A myriad of research has been conducted attesting to the prevalence of basic needs insecurity among college students. In March 2019, the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, in collaboration with the CCC Chancellor’s Office and the Institute for College Access and Success, released a report titled the *California Community Colleges #RealCollege Survey*. The survey included 39,930 participants from 57 community colleges and represented the demographics of the college population currently attending CCC campuses. The survey found that 70% of respondents experienced basic needs insecurity. When asked about specific insecurities, 50% experienced food insecurity, 60% experienced housing insecurity, and 19% experienced homelessness. More than half of respondents worried about running out of food, 38% confessed to not being able to afford rent, and 15% were currently in temporary housing. Of those who experience housing and food insecurity, disparities in the data exist, with LGBTQ, African American, and nontraditional students, such as parents, experiencing higher rates of housing and food insecurity when compared to their peers. Furthermore, the study provided a clear correlation between housing and food insecurities and academic success and matriculation to degree. This correlation is expanded upon in the Public Policy Institute of California report, *Supporting Student Parents in Community College CalWORKS Programs*; which found those participating in CalWORKS are more likely to have better course success rate, experience full-time enrollment, and matriculate to a degree than when not enrolled. Addressing basic needs such as food and housing for college students will improve their overall academic success, as it will permit students to focus on their studies improving college completion rates and overall degree and credit attainment.

*Impact of the pandemic on student basic needs.* To prevent the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID – 19) in March 2020, the Governor of California, Gavin Newsom, initiated a statewide lockdown and the lives of college students rapidly changed. Campuses closed down and overnight transitioned from in-person to online learning models. To capture the impact COVID – 19 was having on students, the California Student Aid Commission collaborated with the UC Davis School of Education’s California Education Lab, and conducted a student survey of both current and incoming students. The survey found that 70% of current students lost some or all their income due to the pandemic and more than half of current and incoming students were worried about meeting their basic needs such as housing, food, and rising technology costs. In a national survey conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, in late April and early May of 2020, 58% of college students experienced basic needs insecurity. The survey found food insecurity among community college students had increased by 2%. In the California Governor’s Council Post-Secondary Education’s 2021 report, *Recovery with Equity*, the council acknowledges, the disparate impact COVID – 19 has had on college students and the need for basic needs support as a tool for equitable recovery. One of the recommendations highlighted in the report is to foster collaboration and alignment among student support departments including basic needs to ensure information is being provided to students and empowering faculty to integrate basic needs resource information into their syllabi.

*Existing resources on CCC campuses.* For some time, CCC have recognized that food and housing insecurity are detrimental to student success and in response have made efforts towards minimizing insecurities on campuses. Prior to COVID – 19 the majority of campuses either had a food pantry or did regular distribution of food on campus. In response to the pandemic, colleges continued to offer food support to students either through electronic grocery gift cards for

emergency food needs, offering drive through food pantry services, and some maintained in-person services available through Basic Need Centers. According to the CCC Chancellor's office, 59 campuses have a center dedicated to student basic needs and all campuses are providing students with information and support to access CalFresh benefits. In October 2020, the CCC Chancellor's office released the *2020 Mental Health Services* report, which found 50% of CCC districts included mental health resource information as part of their orientation, 87% of CCC districts have a web repository of comprehensive student mental health resources, and 67% of CCC districts offer on-campus support for low-income eligible students to enroll in county aid programs including CalFresh and MediCal.

*Arguments in support.* One of the co-sponsors of AB 775, John Burton Advocates for Youth, asserted the need for AB 775, as it “would provide a coordinated and integrated approach to address students’ basic needs by establishing a basic needs center and a basic needs coordinator at each California Community College. The evidence is undeniable that basic needs insecurity has reached crisis proportions and significantly impacts student outcomes”. “Adding to the urgency of this issue is the COVID 19 pandemic, which has exacerbated an already dire issue, as students attempt to manage mass unemployment, housing insecurity, hunger, increased family obligations and health/mental health concerns, while maintaining their studies”. “AB 775 would ensure that all students have access to such support by establishing a basic needs center and basic needs coordinator on each campus, providing a single point of contact for community college students to more easily be connected to basic needs services and resources.”

*Committee comments.* The CCC system is the largest education system in the nation and provides educational opportunities to 2.1 million students attending 116 colleges throughout the state. For the last three years, the CCC Chancellor's office has dedicated time and resources to improving matriculation, transfer rates, and eliminate the achievement gap, which is articulated through the CCC's *Visions for Success*. Woven throughout this mission and goal is an underlying understanding that for students to focus on their studies, their basic needs must be met. In June 2020, the California Department of Social Services published *Senate Bill 77 CalFresh Student Data Report*, which examined statewide data on college student participation in CalFresh and provided methods for improving student participation in the social service. One of the suggested recommendations for improving access to CalFresh was to have the three public postsecondary segments “invest in Basic Needs Centers that integrate food-related programs with other programs such as housing and homelessness services to address student basic needs in a comprehensive way”.

To fully understand the positive impact Basic Needs Centers will have on student access to basic needs support, the *Committee has suggested, and the author has accepted the following amendments:*

- (d) The office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges shall develop and submit to the Governor and the Legislature ~~every two years~~, *every two years beginning on or before May 1, 2023*, a report based on the data and information reported by campuses pursuant to subdivision (c).

*Previous Legislation.* The committee recognizes in previous years copious amounts of bills have been introduced and chaptered to address student basic needs, the following is a concise snapshot of recent chaptered legislation.

- 1) AB 543 (Davies), pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, requires the CCC, CSU and requests the UC to provide students with educational information on CalFresh and the CalFresh student eligibility requirements during campus orientation.
- 2) AB 85 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 4, Statutes of 2021, appropriates \$28.80 million for county administrators and outreach costs associated with CalFresh benefits to students enrolled in higher education institutions; \$2.93 million for CalFresh outreach to students at the UC and the CSU; and \$123.1 million to the CCC to increase student retention, increase CalFresh outreach to CCC students and to provide CCC students with emergency financial assistance grants
- 3) AB 2388 (Berman) of 2019, held in the Senate Education Committee, Requires each California Community College (CCC) campus by February 1, 2021, to develop various methods to increase students' awareness of on- and off- campus basic needs resources. Encourages each CCC campus by July 1, 2021, to establish a Basic Needs Center and the role of a Basic Needs Coordinator, in order to consolidate and centralize the basic needs resources available on campus.
- 4) AB 2884 (Berman), Chapter 294, Statutes of 2020, Expands the use of restricted California Lottery Funds provided to the CCC to include expenditures on housing and food assistance for community college students.
- 5) AB 1278 (Gabriel), Chapter 517, Statutes of 2019, requires each CCC and CSU campus and requests each UC campus to provide on an internet website-based account for an enrolled student notification of and a link to internet sites of CalFresh and local mental health and housing resources as specified.
- 6) AB 74 (Ting), Chapter 23, Statutes of 2019, provides \$9 million in ongoing Proposition 98 general fund increase to CCC to address housing insecurities. Allocates a one-time increase of \$3.9 million to the CCC for student basic needs programs, and allocates a one-time increase of \$7 million in Proposition 63 funds for a grant program for colleges to address mental health services.
- 7) SB 85 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 23, Statutes of 2017, required the Trustees of CSU, authorizes the governing board of participating CCC districts, and encourages the Regents of the UC to designate, a “hunger free campus” if they meet specified criteria, as defined, for the purpose of procuring additional legislative funds.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Alliance for Children's Rights  
Barstow Community College  
California Association of Food Banks  
California Catholic Conference  
Cerritos College  
Cerritos Community College  
Children Now  
County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)

De Anza College  
Excite Credit Union  
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges  
Foster Care Counts  
Fred Finch Youth and Family Services  
Generation Up  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Long Beach City College  
Los Angeles Southwest College  
Modesto Junior College  
One Day, Inc.  
Palomar College  
Pasadena City College Nextup  
Public Counsel  
Saddleback College  
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District  
Schoolhouse Connection  
SEIU California  
Stand Up for Kids  
Student Senate for California Community Colleges  
Young Invincibles

**Opposition**

None on File.

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