

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 2222 (Reyes) – As Amended April 5, 2022

SUBJECT: Student financial aid: Golden State Social Opportunities Program.

SUMMARY: Establishes, upon an appropriation by the Legislature in the Budget Act of 2022, the Golden State Social Opportunities Program (Program). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines for purposes of the Program the following:
 - a) “California-based nonprofit” means an institution based in the state to which contributions have been determined by the United States Internal Revenue Service to be tax-deductible pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the Internal Revenue Code; and,
 - b) “Program” means the Golden State Social Opportunities Program.
- 2) Requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to administer the Program.
- 3) Authorizes CSAC to provide a grant of up to \$20,000 annually to each student who is enrolled in a postgraduate program from a University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) campus or an independent institution of higher education (ICCU), if the student commits to working in a California-based nonprofit eligible setting for their required postdegree hours of supervised experience, as specified.
- 4) Stipulates that money appropriated for the Program in the Budget Act of 2022 shall be available for encumbrance or expenditure by CSAC until June 30, 2027.
- 5) Stipulates that grants awarded under the Program shall not exceed the amount appropriated for the program in the Budget Act of 2022.
- 6) Stipulates that grant funding shall be used to supplement, but not supplant, other sources of grant-based financial aid.
- 7) Requires CSAC to give grant priority as follows:
 - a) First priority for current or former foster youth and homeless youth; and,
 - b) Second priority for individuals who are currently employed at a California-based nonprofit.
- 8) Requires a grant recipient to agree to work in a California-based nonprofit eligible setting for two years and shall have four years, upon completion of the recipient’s postgraduate program, to meet that obligation. Specifies a grant recipient shall agree to repay the state 25% of the total amount of the grant awarded to the recipient annually, up to full repayment of the grant, for each year the recipient fails to do one or more of the following:

- a) Be enrolled in, or have successfully completed, a postgraduate program from a UC, CSU, or an ICCU;
 - b) While enrolled in the postgraduate program, maintain good academic standing; and,
 - c) Upon completion of the postgraduate program, satisfy the requirements to become an associate clinical social worker, an associate professional clinical counselor, an associate marriage and family therapist, or a registered psychological associate.
- 9) Requires that nonperformance of the commitment to work in a California-based nonprofit eligible setting for two years or obtain registration as an associate clinical social worker, an associate professional clinical counselor, or an associate marriage and family therapist shall be certified by the Board of Behavioral Sciences to the CSAC.
- 10) Requires that nonperformance of the commitment to work in a California-based nonprofit eligible setting for two years or obtain a license as a registered psychological associate shall be certified by the Board of Psychology to the CSAC.
- 11) Specifies that any exceptions to the requirement for repayment shall be defined by CSAC, and may include, but will not necessarily be limited to, any of the following:
- a) The Board of Behavioral Sciences deems the grant recipient to have fulfilled the grant recipient's licensing requirements;
 - b) The Board of Psychology deems the grant recipient to have fulfilled the grant recipient's licensing requirements;
 - c) The grant recipient has a condition covered under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 2601, et seq.) or similar state law; and,
 - d) The grant recipient was called or ordered to active duty status for more than 30 days as a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States.
- 12) Authorizes CSAC to use up to 5% of funding appropriated for purposes of the Program for program outreach and administration.
- 13) Authorizes CSAC to adopt regulations necessary for the implementation of the Program. Specifies that CSAC may adopt emergency regulations it deems necessary for the implementation of the Program, as specified.
- 14) Requires CSAC to conduct an evaluation of the Program to determine the effectiveness of the Program to graduate, train, and license associate clinical social workers, associate professional clinical counselors, associate marriage and family therapists, and registered psychological associates.
- 15) Requires CSAC to submit a report on the effectiveness of the program to the Department of Finance and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature on or before December 31, 2026, and every two years thereafter.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act, setting forth the mission of the UC, CSU, and CCC; and, defines "independent institutions of higher education" as nonpublic higher education institutions that grant undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, or both, and that are formed as nonprofit corporations in California and are accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education (Education Code (EC) Section 66010, et seq.).
- 2) Establishes the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) for the purpose of administering specified student financial aid programs (EC Section 69510, et seq.).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Background.* California is currently facing a severe shortage of mental health workers. According to information provided by the author's office, the projected supply of Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCC), and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), will be inadequate to meet future demand. Further, the current makeup of the mental health workforce does not reflect California's diversity, with Black and Latinx professionals being the most underrepresented groups in the field.

Nonprofits are also struggling to maintain staff in the midst of COVID-19 and the Great Resignation. For nonprofits providing mental health services, it is especially important for their workforce to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

Students who are pursuing LCSW, LPCC, and LMFT careers must complete extensive fieldwork education while they are still in school. The required hours depend on the school's accreditation, but can range anywhere from 400-800 hours per year.

Many students seeking to become LCSWs, LPCCs, and LMFTs must scale back or forgo their employment in order to meet the demands of school and their fieldwork hours. This precludes students who cannot afford to stop working from pursuing careers in this field, creating barriers to entering the mental health workforce. This especially affects former foster and homeless youth who seek to serve youth who share their lived experiences, but may lack the financial resources to pursue careers as licensed mental health professionals.

Purpose of the measure. According to the author, "AB 2222 addresses critical shortages within the mental health workforce by establishing a scholarship to reduce financial barriers for students as they complete their fieldwork to become LCSWs, LPCCs, or LMFTs."

The author states, "Under this Program, which is based on the Golden State Teacher Grant, CSAC will administer scholarships of up to \$20,000 annually to students who commit to working for at least two years at a California-based nonprofit upon completion of their graduate school course of study."

Further, the author contends that, "By prioritizing former foster and homeless youth for grants, AB 2222 will ensure California's mental health professionals are reflective of the communities they serve. This bill will also improve quality of care for current foster and homeless youth, who will benefit from working with providers who share their lived experiences."

Arguments in support. According to the California Coalition for Youth, sponsors of the measure, “AB 2222 addresses critical shortages within the mental health workforce by reducing financial barriers for students as they complete their fieldwork to become LCSWs, LPCCs, LMFTs or psychologists. Under this program, which is based on the Golden State Teacher Grant, the California Student Aid Commission will administer scholarships of up to \$20,000 annually to students who commit to working for at least two years at a California-based nonprofit upon completion of their graduate school course of study. Scholarships will be prioritized for former foster and homeless youth to ensure California’s mental health professionals are reflective of the communities they serve.”

Committee comments. California is home to the largest postsecondary system in the nation; serving millions of students a year; many whom rely on the services of CSAC in order to receive various forms of state financial aid. Yet, as of 2021-22, CSAC only has 137.5 authorized ongoing staff positions, as well as 2.2 temporary positions. These positions span seven divisions, the largest of which are program administration and services, information technology (IT), fiscal and administrative services, and the executive division. As of January 2022, CSAC reported that 16% (or 22.5 positions) were vacant, with the IT division accounting for 40% of the vacancies. Committee Staff understands that the majority of CSAC’s vacant positions have been unfilled for less than three months and CSAC is actively recruiting to fill the vacant positions.

The Committee may wish to discuss if too many new financial aid type programs are seeking to be established, thus placing even more requirements and strain on CSAC, whose primary purpose, in part, is to administer the Cal Grant. Additionally, the Committee may wish to discuss if it is prudent to prioritize the types of new grant programs CSAC will administer first.

Additionally, this measure creates the Program, but the bill is silent as to how eligible students will be made aware of the new Program and how they will apply to the Program.

Moving forward, the author may wish to work with the CSAC in order to determine the best method of marketing the Program to eligible students and determining the best way for students to apply.

Further, the Governor’s 2022-23 Budget Proposal calls for a multi-year budget compact with the public segments of higher education. This compact, includes, in part, increasing the number of students who enroll in Social Work by 25% by 2026-27. The goal is to expand and support high-demand career pipelines for climate action, healthcare, social work, and education.

This proposal appears to align with part of the 2022-23 Budget Proposal.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Aspiranet
Bill Wilson Center
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Association of Nonprofits
California Catholic Conference
California Coalition for Youth (Sponsor)

California Opportunity Youth Network
California Psychological Association
Children Now
Family Assistance Program
Los Angeles LGBT Center
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
Orangewood Foundation
Sanctuary of Hope
Sycamores
Women's Center Youth and Family Services
YMCA of San Diego County, Youth and Family Services

Opposition

None on file.

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