

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
Jose Medina, Chair  
AB 524 (Rodriguez) – As Amended April 19, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Postsecondary education: Campus-Recognized Sorority and Fraternity  
Transparency Act

**SUMMARY:** Establishes the Campus-Recognized Sorority and Fraternity Transparency Act (the Act), as specified. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes that the chapter will be known, and may be cited, as the Campus-Recognized Fraternity Transparency Act.
- 2) Requires each institution of higher education to include in the institution's requirements for campus recognition of each campus-affiliated campus-recognized sorority or fraternity, both of the following requirements:
  - a) An institution must collect from the organization campus-recognized sorority or fraternity on or before July 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, all of the following:
    - i) The number of active members in the campus-recognized sorority or fraternity;
    - ii) The number of new members added to the organization campus-recognized sorority or fraternity;
    - iii) The average grade point average of the membership of the campus-recognized sorority or fraternity;
    - iv) The total amount of money earned through fundraising by the campus-recognized sorority or fraternity;
    - v) The campus-recognized sorority's or fraternity's current recognition status by the campus;
    - vi) The current conduct status of the organization, campus-recognized sorority or fraternity, as determined by the institution;
    - vii) Addresses of all chapter houses affiliated with the campus-recognized sorority or fraternity; and,
    - viii) Any additional information the institution may require.
    - ix) Unless otherwise specified, the information collected pursuant to a) above shall be for the academic year immediately preceding the reporting deadline.
  - b) Any campus-recognized sorority or fraternity that does not comply with the institution's collection of information pursuant to a) above be suspended from campus recognition.

- 3) Specifies that a sorority or fraternity that satisfies both of the following is encouraged to comply with the reporting requirements of 2(a) above:
  - a) The sorority or fraternity has more than 50 percent of its members enrolled at the institution of higher education; and,
  - b) The sorority or fraternity is not recognized as an affiliated sorority or fraternity of the institution by the official authorizing body of that institution.
- 4) Encourages a philanthropic student organization that has more than 50 percent of its members enrolled at the institution who are current and former members of a campus-recognized sorority or fraternity that was suspended within the previous four years is to comply with the reporting requirements of 3(a) above.
- 5) The institution shall compile the information collected as specified, into a publicly accessible report published on each respective campus' internet website and sent through a campus-wide email to all enrolled students on or before August 1, 2023, and annually thereafter. The report shall include a list of available mental health resources and the residence addresses of all campus-recognized sorority and fraternity chapter houses. Each annual report shall be archived and remain available on the campus internet website.
- 6) Specifies that an institution that does not have a campus-recognized sorority or fraternity is exempt from the reporting requirement of this subdivision.
- 7) Requires an institution of higher education to include in the annual report both of the following for each campus-recognized sorority and fraternity, participating sorority or fraternity, as specified, and participating philanthropic student organization, as described, for the academic year immediately preceding the reporting deadline:
  - a) The number of citations, or disciplinary actions taken, relating to sexual assault by a member of the sorority, fraternity, or philanthropic student organization; and,
  - b) The addresses and names of the sororities, fraternities, and philanthropic student organizations where misconduct occurred.
- 8) Specifies that a report required pursuant to this subdivision shall not include any personally identifiable information for any individual.
- 9) Makes the following definitions:
  - a) "Academic year," as specified, is July 1 to June 30, inclusive. The starting date of a session will determine the academic year in which it is included.
  - b) "Campus-recognized sorority or fraternity" means a sorority or fraternity that has officially met the formal chartering and recognition requirements at the institution where it operates, and notes that as used in the Act the definition does not include a collegiate honor society.

- c) “Chapter house” means any residence located on or off campus that is owned by the institution of higher education but occupied by a campus-recognized sorority or fraternity, or any residence located on or off campus that is owned and occupied by the campus-recognized sorority or fraternity.
  - d) “Clery Act” means the federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, as specified.
  - e) “Institution of higher education” or “institution” means a campus of the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), or the University of California (UC), a private postsecondary educational institution, or an independent institution of higher education.
  - f) “Misconduct” means any conduct in violation of institutional policies reportable under the Clery Act, as specified, or hazing, as specified.
  - g) “Sexual assault” has the same meaning as under the Clery Act, as specified.
- 10) Notes that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs must be made as specified.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the UC, the CSU, the CCC, independent institutions of higher education, and private postsecondary educational institutions as the segments of postsecondary education in this state. (Education Code (EDC) Section 66010, et seq.)
- 2) Requests the Trustees of the CSU, the Regents of the UC, and the governing board of each community college district to adopt and publish policies on harassment, intimidation, and bullying to be included within the rules and regulations governing student behavior and, if the institution expends funds to support activities related to campus climate, as defined, to adopt and publish the above-described policies. (EDC Section 66302)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Purpose.* According to the author, “Too many lives have been impacted by hazing at California colleges and universities. While progress has been made in curbing sexual violence and excessive drinking, there is still a culture on campuses and within some organizations, which must change. With more transparency, students and families can make informed decisions about the social and professional organizations they choose to invest time, resources, and personal safety into joining.”

“AB 524 would shed light on individual Greek Life organizations which historically have struggled to comply with laws and university policies. This bill would allow students and their families to better understand the history and culture of a particular social organization on campus to make a more informed decision about their education, health and safety. It is reasonable to anticipate that social organization will be held more accountable with transparent information that may encourage them to change organizational culture.”

*Background.* Sororities and fraternities are popular social organizations active at many postsecondary institutions in California. Comprised of dozens of individual organizations overseen by nearly a dozen representative bodies, sororities and fraternities each operate under differing principals and standards. Common requirements for members include a probationary period for pledging members and grade point average and community service requirements for initiated members.

The North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC), one of several representative organizations consisting of 65 men's fraternities, note that their current member organizations have 6,100 chapters located on 800 campuses nationally, with 380,000 undergraduate members and 4.2 million alumni. NIC reported that, in 2013-2014, their members contributed 3,800,000 service hours in local communities, raised \$20.3 million dollars for philanthropic causes, and maintained an average fraternity grade point average of 2.91.

*Reform efforts and transparency.* Instances of hazing, alcohol abuse, and sexual assault have prompted reforms in campus-affiliated sororities and fraternities across the country.

Penn State established the Timothy J. Piazza Center for Fraternity and Sorority Research and Reform in January 2019. The multidisciplinary research center was named in the memory of Timothy Piazza, a sophomore at Penn State who died in February 2017 during pledging activities at Beta Theta Pi, a campus-affiliated fraternity that is permanently banned at the university. The Piazza Center is currently working to develop and manage a national scorecard on fraternities and sororities, host national conversations on hazing, the misuse of alcohol, sexual assault, and overly large and disruptive social events, collect and distribute best practices, and sponsor original research that will inform practices in this field.

The death of 20-year-old Florida State University Pi Kappa Phi fraternity pledge Andrew Coffey in November of 2017 resulted in the significant reforms on the campus, where 22% undergraduates belonged to a fraternity or sorority. The reforms included:

- 1) A new grade point average requirement of 2.5 for every chapter.
- 2) A minimum of 10 documented service hours per member every semester.
- 3) Students who are interested in joining a fraternity or sorority must complete a special orientation programs.
- 4) Organizations must conduct a membership review with their national chapters.
- 5) A new "scorecard" will be available for the public on each chapter.
- 6) Faculty and staff will be added to student review panels that hear conduct cases related to sororities and fraternities.
- 7) New membership dues were enacted to help fund staff positions that work with sororities and fraternities.
- 8) All chapters must have an advisory board with special training

- 9) Social events with alcohol were limited to four in the fall semester and six during the spring.
- 10) New shortened membership period for fraternities was set to six weeks.
- 11) New tailgating rules were established.
- 12) Members must be trained in hazing prevention and leadership development.
- 13) Events with alcohol at houses are only allowed if the chapters use a third-party service and have security approved by the campus police department.

*Committee staff notes that the scorecard developed by Florida State University, which is currently active at [<https://ofsl.union.fsu.edu/current-members/organizational-scorecard>], publishes similar disaggregated data as called for in AB 526.*

*Committee comments.* AB 524 calls for the publishing of the outcomes of allegations of misconduct by sororities and fraternities or their members. Stakeholders representing institutions across higher education segments have noted that they often do not have full rosters of members of campus-recognized fraternities and sororities, and that some conduct violations undertaken by organization members may have no relation to the student's fraternity or sorority membership. Stakeholders have also noted the possibility that reporting individual student outcomes, even without personal information being explicitly given, could create a de facto Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) violation.

*Moving forward, the author may wish to work with stakeholders to identify an avenue to disclose organizational conduct violations, while minimizing the possibility that a student's non-organizational conduct or personal information would be disclosed.*

Currently AB 524 requires institutions to report conduct relating to sexual assault by a member of the sorority, fraternity, or philanthropic student organization, and the address where addresses and names of the sororities, fraternities, and philanthropic student organizations where misconduct occurred.

*Moving forward, the author may wish to consider clarifying this language to specify that the conduct being reported includes incidents of hazing, alcohol violations (as defined by the institutions), sexual assault, and other misconduct as defined.*

Amendments to AB 524 make reference to philanthropic student organizations, but provide no definitions. *Moving forward, the author may wish to explicitly define these organization so as to clarify and encourage their participation in reporting.*

*Prior legislation.* AB 1155 (Rodriguez, 2019) was substantively similar to this legislation, and was held in the Senate Committee on Education pursuant to COVID-19 bill restrictions.

SB 702 (Hill, 2019) would require, commencing with the 2020–21 academic year, each institution of higher education to prepare a report compiling all reported violations of an anti-hazing policy at the institution or state or federal law relating to hazing, as specified. SB 702 was substantively amended to remove it from the Senate Committee on Education's jurisdiction.

AB 620 (Block), Chapter 637, Statutes of 2011, requests the Trustees of the CSU, the Regents of the UC, and the governing board of each community college district to adopt and publish policies on harassment, intimidation, and bullying to be included within the rules and regulations governing student behavior.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Associated Students UC Santa Barbara Human Rights Board  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Free the Period  
Students for Reproductive Justice  
University of California Student Association

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Kevin J. Powers / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960