

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 1326 (Arambula) – As Amended April 15, 2021

SUBJECT: Public social services: county liaison for higher education

SUMMARY: Requires county human service agencies to designate one employee as a staff liaison to operate as a direct contact for public higher education institutions within the county the agency serves. Encourages the agency to collaborate with specified designees from campuses of public higher education within the county to create protocols. Requires the California State University (CSU) and the California Community Colleges (CCC) and request the University of California (UC) to conduct a survey on the effectiveness of the liaison and report the results of the surveys to the Legislature, as specified. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines, for purposes of this measure, “public higher education” as any campus, branch, or function of the CCC, the CSU, and the UC.
- 2) Requires county human services agencies to designate at least one employee to serve as a point of contact for academic counselors and other relevant professional staff at a campus of an institution of public higher education located within the county. The point of contact or liaison is tasked with providing information on programs and services offered by the agency that may be available to students attending a public higher education campus within the county. The liaison established by the county services agency is not mean to replace or alter existing relationships between counties and campuses, as specified.
- 3) Requires county human services agencies to develop protocols for engagement between the agency and a public higher education campus located within the county. Encourages the development of the protocols for the agency to consult with stakeholders including, but not limited to:
 - a) A representative, who is tasked with addressing student basic needs, from each public higher education campus within the county.
 - b) A counselor from each public higher education campus within the county.
 - c) Representatives from relevant student, faculty or staff organizations from a public higher education campus within the county.
- 4) Encourages county human services agencies to provide location and hours of operation information to the public higher education campuses located within the agency’s jurisdiction. Further encourages the county human services agencies to provide information regarding online and telephone access to program applications.
- 5) Encourages public higher education campuses to provide information regarding applying for human services programs and benefits to the campus administrator associated with student services or their designee.

- 6) Requires all personnel information shared between the county agencies and the institutions to be done in compliance with state and federal confidential laws.
- 7) Permits the State Department of Social Services to implement any of the above requirements by an all-county letter or similar instructions.
- 8) Requires the Office of the Chancellor of the CCC and the Office of the Chancellor of the CSU to collaborate with county human services agencies for the purpose of conducting a survey on the effectiveness of the county liaison position as established above (1). The survey at a minimum shall address the following:
 - a) The challenges faced by county staff liaisons in responding to the requests of counselors and other relevant professional staff;
 - b) The challenges or hurdles faced by counselors and other relevant professional staff in engaging with the county staff liaisons;
 - c) Any changes in counselor's or relevant professional staff knowledge or awareness of county programs as a result of the county liaison; and,
 - d) The experiences of students connected to county services through counselors or other relevant professional staff.
- 9) Requests the Chancellor of the CCC and the Chancellor of the CSU after conducting the survey established in (8) to report its findings to the Legislative Committees on education and human services in both the Assembly and Senate, the Assembly and Senate Budget Committees, and to the State Department of Social Services by January 1, 2025.
- 10) Requests the Office of the President of the UC to conduct a survey described in (8), to publish a report of the finding, and disseminate the report in accordance with (9) by January 1, 2025.
- 11) Stipulates a report completed in (8) and (9) must be in compliance with Government Code Section 9795.
- 12) Establishes, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this bill contains costs mandated by the state, the state shall reimburse the applicable entities.
- 13) States legislative findings and declarations relating to college students' basic needs and the ability for county health and human services programs to assist college students in alleviating their basic needs insecurities.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the federal nutrition program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), pursuant to the Food Stamp Act of 1964 to provide funding to low-income households for food and essential household items. Requires the federal government to appropriate funds for the nutritional benefits and enables the states to distribute the funds and determine eligibility based on federal regulations (7 United States Code (U.S.C) Section 2011 et seq.).

- 2) Establishes the CalFresh program to administer federal SNAP monetary benefits to qualifying families and individuals, as specified (Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 18900 et seq.).
- 3) Restricts any individual, who is enrolled at least half-time in an institutions of higher education, from qualifying for SNAP benefits, unless the individual qualifies for an exception, as specified (7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 273.5 et seq.).
- 4) Establishes the statewide, CalFresh program for purposes of distributing federal SNAP benefits to low-income families, as specified. (Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 18900 et seq.).
- 5) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the UC Board of Regents (Regents) and grants the Regents full powers of organization and governance subject only to legislative control as necessary to ensure the security of funds, compliance with terms of its endowments, and the statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property, and the purchase of materials, goods, and services. (Article IX, Section (9)(a) of the California Constitution)
- 6) Stipulates no provision of the Donahue Higher Education Act shall apply to UC unless the UC Regents adopts the provision. (Education Code (EDC) Section 67400)
- 7) Establishes the CSU system, made of 23 campuses, and bestows upon the CSU Trustees, through the Board of Trustees, the powers, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, and control of the CSU system (EDC Section 66606 and 89030, et seq).
- 8) 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 (EDC Section 70900).
- 9) Requires each campus of the CSU and the CCC, and requests each campus of the 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).
- 10) Requires each public or private higher education institution in a county that participation in the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) to meet certain requirements as specified, including requiring food facilities operated by the campus to apply to become a food vendor of RMP, annually providing information on becoming an RMP vendor to non-campus run vendors; and informing students on RMP vendors on campus (EDC Section 66025.93).
- 11) Requires California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to collaborate with the Chancellor's Office of the CCC to develop and administer a program to provide financial aid training to high school and community college counselors for the purpose of addressing the financial needs of low-income families throughout the state, as specified (EDC Section 69514.5).

- 12) Establishes the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program within the CCC and specifies the intention of the program is to assist CalWORKs recipients prepare for employment (EDC Section 79200 et seq.).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: *Double Referral.* This measure was heard by the Assembly Human Services Committee on April 7, 2021, and passed out with a vote of 8-0.

Student basic needs in higher education. Food insecurity is defined by the U.S Department of Agriculture as the condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. Housing insecurity among college students is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as an individual who is lacking regular, fixed, or adequate nighttime residence. In the last few years an abundance of research has been conducted regarding the prevalence of basic needs insecurities among college students. In 2019, the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) published the results of the Student Expenses and Resources Survey (SEARS), which found 35% of California college students surveyed experienced food insecurity. In the same survey, 10% of California college students surveyed did not have enough financial income to pay rent and 1% identified as having an inconsistent living situation. The survey identified racial disparities among those who identified as homeless, with 38% of college students identifying as both Hispanic or Latino and homeless and 23% identifying as Black or African American and homeless.

Data from the three public higher education segments, corroborate the data from the CSAC survey. In 2019, the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice Survey collaborated with the CCC to publish a survey of CCC students' basic needs. Of those surveyed, 50% of CCC students experienced food insecurity within the past 30 days and 60% experienced housing insecurity in the previous year. 19% of respondents experienced homelessness in the previous year. The percentage of food insecurity rises to 60% when students identify as African American, American Indian, or Alaskan Native. In 2018, the CSU conducted a survey of its student population and found that 41.5% of CSU students identified as food insecure and 10.9% of CSU students identified as having experienced homelessness one or more times in the previous year. CSU students who identify as Black and first in their families to attend college, experience food insecurity at a higher rate than their peers, as the survey found more than 65% identified as food insecure and 18% identified as homeless. In 2016 the University of California Office of the President commissioned a survey to determine the prevalence of food insecurity among UC college students. The study determined 44% of undergraduate students and 26% of graduate students experienced food insecurity. The study found 5% of UC undergraduate and graduate students identifying as homeless. In each of these surveys and studies conducted by the public higher education institutions, students who identify as homeless and/or food insecure self-report the daily struggle of meeting their basic needs affects them academically as they are consistently worrying or having to make difficult decisions regarding how to spend their finances which ultimately impacts their academic progression.

Impact of the pandemic on students' 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 an online learning model. To capture the impact COVID- 19 was having on students CSAC 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 more than half of current and incoming students were worried about meeting their basic needs such as housing, food, and rising technology costs. In late April and early May 2020, the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, conducted a national survey which found food insecurities had increased among college students due to the pandemic. Students at two-year institutes experienced a 2% increase in food insecurity. Students at four-year institutes experienced a 4% increase in food insecurities. The Regents of the UC Special Committee on Basic Needs in November 2020 published, *The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs*, which reported 39% of undergraduate students in 2020 identified as food insecure and 64% of UC undergraduates were concerned the pandemic would impact their ability to meet their basic needs.

College student access to social services. Perhaps the most well-known county-level social service available to students is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP is a federal program overseen by the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) a division of the U.S. Agricultural Department which provides monthly cash benefits to alleviate hunger and provide nutritional food choices to low-income households. State agencies work collaboratively with FNS to administer SNAP and ensure the monetary benefits are provided to qualifying families who meet the eligibility factors established by FNS. In California, SNAP is known as CalFresh and California Department of Social Services works with local county welfare departments to administer the benefits. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, between January and March 2020, 4.1 million Californians received around \$166 in monthly CalFresh benefits. Students are eligible for CalFresh if they meet one of the 11 exemptions provide for college students by the FNS.

Despite the 11 exemptions provided, college student participation in CalFresh is very low partly due to bureaucratic barriers placed upon college students to prove their eligibility. In the 2019 SEARS survey conducted by CSAC, 82% of college students who identified as food insecure did not receive food assistance. In June 2020, CDSS published *SB 77 CalFresh Student Data Report*, on college student participation in CalFresh and methods for improving student participation in the social service. According to the report in the 2018-2019 academic year, 127,360 students successfully received CalFresh food benefits, but the report found more than 500,000 students were likely to be eligible for the food benefits in the same academic year. The report estimated the student participation rate in CalFresh is between 18% to 30%.

In addition to CalFresh, if they meet various eligibility requirements, students can receive additional assistance from a variety of social service programs offered by the county including mental health services, health insurance coverage, housing assistance, and funding for childcare. CalWORKs is another federally-funded program available to students who are parents. California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program partners with the CCC who provides education and vocation training that meets the CalWORKs at every community college. According to the Public Policy Institute of California October 2020 report on *Supporting Student Parents in Community College CalWORKs Program*, 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 by increasing student participation in social service programs is a cornerstone of the Governor's Council for Post-Secondary Education's *Recovery with Equity: a roadmap for Higher Education after the pandemic*. Specifically the report calls for a simplified and integrated system that enables qualified college students access to the state's robust social services including CalFresh, housing programs, healthcare including mental health, direct aid; subsidized childcare and

transportation. AB 1326 addresses this goal by the Governor and his Council by providing a simplified pathway for students and college staff to seek assistance in applying for social service programs at the county level.

Need for the bill. According to the author's office, "beyond addressing basic needs, connecting students with county health and human service programs can be critical to a student's academic performance and success. Unfortunately, navigating the eligibility and enrollment process for these programs can be difficult for both higher education counselors and students alike. With assistance from the county, counselors and other college staff could more quickly connect students with county resources. AB 1326 would require county human services agencies to designate a staff liaison to serve as just such a link between counselors and county services. With liaisons routing counselors or other college staff to the appropriate program, in-need students can more rapidly find the support they need."

The Legislature and college campuses in recent years have taken aggressive steps to disseminate information on the availability of social services to students including the most recent investment in February 2021 of \$2.9 million for CalFresh outreach to students at the UC and the CSU and \$3.1 million for CalFresh outreach to students at the CCC. However despite this increase in outreach and encouragement for students to apply for social services, students and campus staff at the CCC, CSU, and UC are still perplexed by the maze of requirements students must adhere to qualify for social benefits. According to the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice's 2020 national survey entitled, *#REALCOLLEGE during the pandemic*, it was found that many students did not apply for support because they did not know they were eligible. While the report did not include California Colleges, research from within California demonstrates students do not apply for social services not because they are unaware but because of the confusion of how and where to apply. In the Regents of the UC Special Committee on Basic Needs report, *The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs*, the UC identified a primary factor leading to the successful enrollment of a student in CalFresh is a strong relationship and a direct line of communication between basic needs staff and the county agency administering CalFresh.

Arguments in support. The California Student Aid Commission supports AB 1326 as "it will help provide support to students in applying for the various social service benefits that help meet their basic needs and stay in college. The Commission has been leading a CalFresh Work Group for several months and believes this bill will provide critical support and resources for our lowest – income students". Offering a student's perspective, according to the Student Senate for California Community Colleges "counselors hear from students dealing with various social, mental, and economic problems, such as homelessness, food insecurity, and mental health. Despite their desire to connect their students with appropriate county-funded or county-administered services many counselors do not have the time or expertise to navigate county government for this purpose. Based on a successful model in Orange County for the CalWORKs population, AB 1326 would better align students with available publicly funded services and would strengthen the partnership between college counselors and counties. By connecting students to much needed public relief, they are given the tools to succeed in their personal and educational lives."

Committee comments. For years witness statements from students, staff, and faculty at all three segments have filled hearing rooms regarding the difficulty of applying for CalFresh and other social services provided by county agencies. California is comprised of 58 counties each with

unique social service needs. While each of these counties receive instructions from the California Department of Social Services, each county is siloed in its efforts to approve applicants request for social services including students seeking assistance to alleviate basic needs insecurities. By providing a single point of contact for each county at the local level, AB 1326 uniquely addresses the issue county by county of confusion between the county agencies and the higher education institutions within the county boundary. AB 1326 lays the infrastructure for county health and human service agencies to achieve the aforementioned Governor's Council goal of a simplified and integrated system that enables qualified college students access to state's robust social services by ensuring communication and collaboration between the county agencies and the higher education institutions within the county are occurring with ease.

To ensure the language in AB 1326 applies to all public higher education institutions, to fix a drafting error, to ensure the report is delivered to the appropriate committees, and to avoid chaptering out of a section, the Committee has offered and the author has accepted the following amendments:

Section 10005 (b)(2) A counselor from each campus or *relevant professional staff* from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county.

Section 10005 (b) (3) Relevant organizations representing the interests of students, faculty, and staff *from each of a* campus of an institution of public higher education within the county.

Section ~~66027.7~~ 66027.9 ~~66027.7.~~ 66027.9(a) The Office of the Chancellor of the California State University and the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community College shall, *and the Office of the President of the University of California is requested to*, in collaboration with county human services agencies, ~~shall~~ conduct a survey to determine the effectiveness of the county liaison position established pursuant to Section 10005 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. The survey shall address, at a minimum, all of the following...

Section ~~66027.7~~ 66027.9 ~~66027.7.~~ 66027.9 (b) The Office of the Chancellor of the California State University and the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges shall, *and the Office of the President of the University of California is requested to* report the results of the survey required by subdivision (a) to the *Senate Committees on Education and Human Services, the Assembly Committees on Higher Education and Human Services* ~~of both houses of the Legislature~~, the Assembly Committee on Budget, the Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, and to the State Department of Social Services on or before January 1, 2025.

~~(e) The Office of the President of the University of California is requested to conduct the survey described in subdivision (a) and is requested to report the results of the survey to the Committees on Education and Human Services of both houses of the Legislature, the Assembly Committee on Budget, the Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, and to the State Department of Social Services on or before January 1, 2025.~~

Finally, due to the similarities between AB 1326 and AB 2933 (Medina) of 2018, the cost estimation of the bill is roughly \$ 2 million. However social service programs administered by county agencies of administration are federally funded and county agencies do receive administrative funding for each qualifying application. Additionally the county in which the student resides will receive an economic boost as the student will spend their social service

monetary benefits in the county they reside. Preliminary data provided by a UC Basic Needs coordinator on the number of potential UC students who would qualify for CalFresh with the new zero expected family contribution exemption, among Free Application for Federal Student Aid applicants in 2018-2019, there is a total of \$232 million dollars unclaimed CalFresh benefits annually, that could be benefiting students, their community, and in turn California. If providing a county liaison assists with each of these students receiving CalFresh, that is a return of investment of \$116 to \$1.

Related and 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 legislation.

- 1) AB 2933 (Medina) of 2018, held in the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file, would have required county health and human service agencies to designate an agency liaison for higher education and encouraged agencies to consult with community colleges, as specified.
- 2) AB 543 (Davies), awaiting action on the Assembly Floor, 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.
- 3) AB 775 (Berman), pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, 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.
- 4) AB 396 (Gabriel), pending in the Assembly Human Services Committee, requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) by May 31, 2022 to issue a guidance letter regarding eligibility requirements for campus-based programs at the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) to become state-approved employment and training programs and requires campus-based programs at the CCC and CSU, and requests campus-based programs at the UC to apply to become state-approved employment and training programs by September 1, 2022.
- 5) AB 85 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 4, Statutes of 2021, appropriates \$28.8 8 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.
- 6) SB 174 (Dodd), Chapter 173, Statutes of 2019, requires CDSS by January 1, 2021 to create a standardized form to be used by higher education institutions for the purposes of verifying a student's participation in either a federal or state work-study program for the purpose of determining CalFresh eligibility.
- 7) 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.

- 8) SB 85 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 23, Statutes of 2017, required the Trustees of the CSU, authorizes the governing board of participating a CCC district, 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

California Student Aid Commission
Community College League of California
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
University of California

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Ellen Cesaretti-Monroy / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960