

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 2881 (Berman) – As Amended March 28, 2022

**[This bill is double referred to the Assembly Human Services Committee and will be heard by the Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]**

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: students with dependent children

**SUMMARY:** Requires the California Community Colleges (CCC) and the California State University (CSU), and requests the University of California (UC) to provide students with information on the California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC), as defined; to grant priority registration to student parents, as defined; and to create a website with resources for student parents. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Adds to the information on how to enroll in WIC to the information required to be offered by Basic Needs Centers on CCC.
- 2) Requires each campus of the CSU, and each campus within a community college district, and requests each campus of the UC to offer priority registration to student parents. Clarifies this provision is only required if the campus offers priority registration and that the campus is to offer the registration to student parents who have a dependent minor living with them.
- 3) Requires campuses of the CCC and the CSU Board of Trustees, and requests that the UC Board of Regents provide all incoming students with educational information regarding WIC, including the eligibility requirements, during campus orientation.
- 4) Adds WIC information to the list of resources each campus of the CSU and CCC is required to maintain on the internet website-based student account associated with a student's attendance at the institution. Requests each campus of the UC to add WIC information to the list of resources on the internet website-based student account associated with a student's attendance at the institution.
- 5) Requires each campus of the CSU and CCC and requests that each campus of the UC do the following:
  - a) Create by February 1, 2023 a student parent internet webpage that is visible and easily accessible from the drop-down menu on the campus webpage;
  - b) Include all the on and off campus student parent resources on both the student parent internet webpage and the internet website-based student account associated with a student's attendance at the institution. Information provided on the on- and off- campus resources will include the description of the service or resource, the location of the service or resource, the point of contact for the service or resource, and any eligibility restrictions on accessing the service or resource;
  - c) Provide the student parent internet web page link during orientation;

- d) Provide to faculty the student parent internet web page link and encourage faculty to include the link on their syllabi; and,
  - e) Update the resources listed on the student parent internet web page link by the first day of every fall and spring semester or quarter.
- 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 student parents including, but not limited to:
- a) A March 2021 report from Wheelhouse at the University of California, Davis found that among the nearly 1.5 million California college and university students who applied for financial aid in 2018, 202,327 were student parents, representing 13.4% of the student population;
  - b) Addressing the needs of student parents can also help higher education systems reach their goals of reducing equity gaps for populations that have been historically underserved in higher education; and,
  - c) Helping student parents reach their educational goals will have a multiplier effect of increasing family income and helping more children succeed in school.
- 8) States it is the Legislature's intent to do the following:
- a) Support students with dependent children who are enrolled at the UC, the CSU, or the CCC; and,
  - b) Once the Cradle to Career Database is implemented future data and outcome reporting on student parents will be included in the California Cradle to Career Data System.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act and assigns the mission of the UC, the CSU and the CCC (Education Code (EDC) Section 66010, et seq).
- 2) Establishes by July 1, 2022 Basic Needs Centers and the position of a Basic Needs Coordinator at CCC campuses to provide students with single point of contact for on-and off-campus basic needs services, as defined (EDC Section 66023.5).
- 3) Requires campuses of the CCC and the CSU Board of Trustees, and requests the UC Board of Regents to provide all incoming students with educational information regarding the CalFresh, including the eligibility requirements, during campus orientation (EDC Section 66027.4).
- 4) Requires each campus of the CSU and CCC and requests the UC to include on the internet website-based student account associated with the student's attendance at the institution information, including the weblink, on the following public services and programs:

- a) The CalFresh program;
  - b) Resources as determined by the institution for county or local housing services, as defined; and,
  - c) Resources as determined by the institution for county or mental health services (EDC Section 66027.6).
- 5) Authorizes the CSU and each community college district, and requests the UC to offer priority registration for any existing or former member of the State Guard or a former member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is a California resident and has been honorably discharged, as defined (EDC Section 66025.8).
- 6) Authorizes the CSU and each community college district, and requests the UC to offer priority registration to foster youth, former foster youth, homeless youth, or former homeless youth, as defined (EDC Section 66025.9).
- 7) Requires each community college district to offer priority registration to EOP students, students receiving CalWORKS and students who receive Tribal TANF as defined (EDC Section 66025.91 and 66025.92).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** *Need for the measure.* According to the Author, “The journey to and through college is challenging for many students, but it is even more challenging for student parents as they juggle academic demands while also raising children. The disruption of higher learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic has also brought urgent attention to the needs of student parents, whose challenges are compounded as school and child care interruptions place significant new demands on their time and attention. Research has found that one in five college students are student parents and that student parents are almost twice as likely to leave college without a degree after six years. Among students of color, a higher proportion are parenting while in college: 33 percent of Black students, 30 percent of Native American students, and 21 percent of Latinx students have children.”

“Student parents also face greater economic barriers than students without children: over two-thirds of student parents live in or near poverty, and student parents have higher levels of unmet financial need and higher median student debt. As a result, the student parent population deserves particular focus and support. AB 2881 would provide a multifaceted approach to support student parents at the community colleges, California State University, and University of California by granting priority registration to student parents, establishing a student parent webpage for every campus highlighting available services and resources, and increasing awareness of the California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children. This bill would remove barriers that inhibit academic success and degree attainment for student parents, bring greater attention to their needs, and in doing so, uplift their children as well.”

*California Special Supplemental and Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).* Established in 1974, WIC is a federal grant program administered at the federal level by the

Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Similar to CalFresh or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), WIC is administered by the Federal Government, but state agencies are responsible for determining applicant's eligibility and providing benefits and services to approved precipitants. The mission of WIC is to provide food, nutrition counseling, and access to health services to low-income women, infants and children who are found to be at nutritional risk. Research has shown WIC has dramatically improved birth outcomes and saved on health care related costs of infants and young children. WIC provides assistance to pregnant women, breastfeeding women, non-breastfeeding, but postpartum women, infants up to age one and children up to age five. WIC provides services to 53% of all infants born in the United States. The benefits provided by WIC include supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education and counseling at WIC clinics, and screening and referrals to other health, welfare, and social services.

Unlike Calfresh, college students do not have to meet any additional qualifications, they simply have to be within the population WIC serves and be nutritionally at risk. To be identified as nutritionally at risk, one must be anemic, under-weight, have a history of pregnancy complications, have dietary risks or fail to meet the current dietary guidelines. The California Department of Public Health administers WIC and there are 84 local agencies that provide WIC services. In 2021, according to data provided by the USDA, California provided WIC benefits to 947,788 individuals statewide.

Currently, information on how to obtain WIC benefits are provided through the UC health centers on campus. At the CSU, information on how to apply for WIC is provided in the same manner as CalFresh; however, assistance in applying for WIC is not conducted on campus. At the CCC, student basic needs centers are tasked with providing information on local and state programs that will assist students in accessing resources to alleviate their food, housing, and health insecurities. Therefore, once the basic needs centers are operational in July of 2022, one would assume information on WIC will be provided.

*Student parents in higher education.* In August 2019, the United States Government Accountability Office released the report "More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid" which found in the 2015-2016 academic year 22 percent of all undergraduates were parents and of those 22 percent, 55 percent were single parents. According to the UC Davis School of Education, data captured from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) and the CA Dream Act Application for the 2018-2019 academic year found 72% of all student parents intended to enroll at the CCC, 12% intended to enroll at the CSU, and 1% intended to enroll at the UC. In March 2021, a research brief presented by the UC Davis Wheelhouse Center for Community College Leadership and Research, found of the nearly 1.5 million students who applied for financial aid in 2018-2019, 13.4% were parents. The report found on average, community college student parents were more likely to have a higher GPA in their first semester than their non-parent counterparts; but, were likely to have a greater financial need than their non-parent peers, attempt and complete fewer credits per term, be less likely to persist year to year, and be less likely to earn a degree or certificate.

California Competes in August 2021 produced a blog series on "Unpacking the Student Parent Policy Agenda". The series highlighted the need for California higher education institutions to examine the needs of student parents by increasing accessibility to child care, increasing the

affordability of higher education, advancing student – parent friendly institutional designs, and collect data on student parents. Specifically, the blog series highlighted the lack of data collected pertaining to student parents and the need for data to make informed policy decisions on how to best serve the unique needs of this population.

Some institutions do collect some data on student parents. In 2019, Fresno State conducted a survey which concluded 20% of students on campus were parents. After collecting this empirical data, the campus began to create infrastructure supports around basic needs to ensure the student parents are able to continue their education and obtain their goal of a degree. In the spring of 2021, the UC published a report containing recommendations from the UC Parenting Students Workgroup. The report found student parents had more basic needs challenges when compared to their non-parenting peers and were more worried about their debt and financial circumstances. In an effort to combat student parent’s food and housing insecurities, various campuses launched pilots centered on helping student parents. UC Santa Cruz launched a student parent meal plan to provide students with a fixed number of meals in the dining hall for themselves and their families. UC Davis offers family housing with an available pantry where residents regularly hold community dinners for student parents. The report made an array of recommendations to help prioritize the needs of student parents including providing priority registration, and integrating student parent issues and resources into student orientations; both of which are addressed in AB 2881 (Berman). Additionally, all UC campuses have a parent resource website as described by AB 2881 (Berman).

*Priority registration.* The EDC provides priority registration for the following groups of students at both the CCC and the CSU: any member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States, any member or former member of the State Guard, current and former foster youth, and current and former homeless youth. According to the UC Office of the President, the UC also offers priority registration to those groups of students.

Additionally, the CCC is required in the EDC to offer priority registration to students who participate in Extended Opportunity Programs and Service programs (EOPS), disabled students (DSP), and students who participate in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for kids (CalWORKs) program. According to the CCC Chancellor’s office, community college districts can also add additional subgroups of students who can receive priority registration. Athletes, graduating/transferring students, students who participate in TRIO Programs, Puente Project, MESA, UMOJA, and students who participate in Student Success programs (those who attend orientation) or in the Promise program are also offered priority registration. Due to the multitude of “priority registration” sub-categories established in Education Code and by community college districts, there are two levels of priority registration at the CCC. Level 1 are the statutorily required priority registration and level 2 are students close to graduation or first-time students who have completed orientation, assessment, and developed student education plans. Everyone else comes after those two groups in terms of priority registration. In spring 2020 the total number of level 1 students who were granted priority registration were as follows: 16,000, foster youth or former foster youth; 2,400, current or former homeless youth; 11,000 CalWORKs recipients; 63,000 DSPS students; 70,000 EOPS students; and 34,000 current or former members of the Armed Forces or State Guard.

In addition to the EDC requirements, the CSU provides priority registration at all campuses to California Promise Program Participants. California Title 5 regulations, division 5, chapter 1, subchapter 2, Article 2, Section 40106 stipulates that each campus of the CSU has the authority to grant priority registration to any sub-category of student. For example, at some CSU campuses, dean's list students receive priority registration as do incoming students.

Since UC is constitutionally autonomous, the EDC requests the system to offer priority registration to military personnel, current and former foster youth, and current and former homeless youth. Based on information from the UC Office of the President, each campus determines its own priority registration. Some groups are afforded the benefit of priority registration including foster youth and veterans. Furthermore, UC Irvine, UC San Diego, UC Davis, and UC Santa Barbara all provide priority registration to student parents.

*Arguments in support.* According to the Education Trust – West, “the journey to and through college is challenging for many students, but it is even more challenging for student parents as they juggle academic demands while also raising children. The Education Trust–West’s latest report, Hear My Voice II: Supporting Success for Parenting and Unhoused Women of Color highlights that women of color in the California State University system were already facing many of the same inequities that now threaten the educational futures of many more. This report highlights the voices of students of color and offers a deep dive into women of color’s experiences across CSU campuses and offers recommendations to begin addressing inequities and make lasting investments in the future of higher education. AB 2881 (Berman) would remove barriers that inhibit academic success and degree attainment for student parents and brings attention to their needs. Helping student parents reach their educational goals will have a multiplier effect of increasing family income and helping more children succeed in school.”

*Committee comments.* Currently, FASFA data seems to be the only data point collected to determine the number of student parents at each of the three public higher education system. FASFA data is only part of the story as not every student fills out a FASFA application and FASFA data identifies dependents up to 25 years of age. As defined in AB 2881, a student parent is a student with a minor dependent living with them. Currently the segments do not collect this data point and would have to change their applications or would require students to self-verify without the ability for the campus to confirm if the student parent did in fact have a dependent minor living with them.

With a vast number of sub-categories of students already receiving priority registrations, and campuses assigning levels to the groups provided priority registration; the Committee questions whether it is prudent to assign yet another priority when the State is unsure of the total number of student parents. Student parents with minor children living at home would benefit from the ability to select courses earlier than the general population as the options would be greater to accommodate their schedule.

*Moving forward the Author may wish to work with the three public higher education segments to determine a hierarchy by which to grant student parents priority registration and to determine a definition for a student parent which captures a verifiable data point of who is a student parent with dependent minors.*

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

American Association of University Women - California  
California Competes: Higher Education for A Strong Economy  
Michelson Center for Public Policy  
Student Senate for California Community Colleges  
The Education Trust - West  
University of California Student Association  
Young Invincibles

**Opposition**

None on file.

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