

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 2425 (Bryan) – As Amended March 24, 2022

SUBJECT: Community colleges: Hire UP: From Corrections to Career Pilot Program

SUMMARY: Establishes the Hire UP: From Corrections to Career Pilot Program, to be administered by the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and the Student Aid Commission (CSAC). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Specifies that this article shall be known, and may be cited as, the Hire UP: From Corrections to Career Pilot Program.
- 2) Stipulates that the Hire UP: From Corrections to Career Pilot Program is to be administered by the CSAC and the CCCCCO, for purposes of providing justice-involved individuals access to the credential programs and workforce support needed to enter, participate, and compete in California's economy.
- 3) Specifies that the CCCCCO may enter into agreements with up to 10 community college districts (CCD) for a five-year pilot program to provide funding for stipends to formerly incarcerated individuals.
- 4) Stipulates that stipends provided under this article shall be equal to the state minimum wage for the duration of the academic program in which the student is enrolled.
- 5) Requires the stipend amount to be determined based on the number of hours in the academic program, up to 40 hours per week for a full-time program.
- 6) Requires students receiving stipends, as specified, to have access to all supportive, academic, and professional services available through the Rising Scholars Network and their partners, or any services and programs offered by the participating community college district that are designed to benefit justice-involved students.
- 7) Specifies that the CCCCCO will develop an application for CCDs wishing to participate to apply for funding, as specified. The application will include, but not be limited to, all of the following information:
 - a) Current participation in the Rising Scholars Network or in another dedicated reentry program;
 - b) A description of the mechanism the community college district will use to measure program and student success;
 - c) A demonstration that the community college district has sufficient staff and resources to serve students in the program, including one dedicated student outreach and recruitment staff position and one dedicated workforce and industry development staff position;

- d) A commitment to serve a specified number of students, as established by the chancellor's office;
 - e) A description of the partners and services available to students participating in the program; and,
 - f) A description of the local employers, industry recruiters, trade groups, career centers, and other workforce placement entities that the community college district will engage for the purpose of establishing a career pathway for students receiving a stipend, as specified.
- 8) Requires the CCCCCO to establish requirements for CCDs related to program data collection and the number of stipend recipients per district.
- 9) Requires the CCCCCO to develop criteria for the selection of individual stipend recipients, including, but not limited to, all of the following criteria:
- a) The student has been released from incarceration within the last three years;
 - b) The student is a current participant in the Rising Scholars Network or in another dedicated reentry program; and,
 - c) The student is enrolled in a career education or degree program at a CCC campus.
- 10) Specifies that the CCCCCO shall submit an annual report to the Legislature on the implementation of the pilot program, including, but not limited to, all of the following information:
- a) The number of students receiving a stipend pursuant to this article;
 - b) The degree or training program the student has completed or is participating in;
 - c) The name of each community college district participating pursuant to this article;
 - d) The outcomes for all participants, including employment, additional education, or business startups;
 - e) The percentage of students employed in the field in which they received a degree or completed training;
 - f) The degree to which Hire UP supportive services acknowledge and address historic racial inequity and socioeconomic barriers to workforce participation for the target population groups; and,
 - g) The impact of the pilot program on the target population groups, including key conclusions and policy recommendations to provide guidance to the Legislature and the Governor.
- 11) Requires the report outlined in 10) above to be reported as specified.

- 12) Requires participating CCDs to provide all information, as specified, to the CCCCCO to facilitate pilot program evaluation.
- 13) Specifies that participating CCDs and community partners may be required to participate in technical assistance activities, including, but not limited to, convening practice communities to identify and help replicate evidence-based practices and facilitate an assessment and evaluation of the performance and success of the pilot program.
- 14) Establishes that funding for the Hire UP pilot program shall be subject to appropriation by the Legislature for purposes of this article, up to sixty million dollars (\$60,000,000) annually.
- 15) Specifies that Funding for the Hire UP pilot program will not draw from, supplant, or redirect existing state or federally funded education, workforce development, or employment services programs, except that those funds may, but shall not be required to, be used as leverage with Hire UP funding.
- 16) Specifies that the provisions of this bill will remain in effect only until January 1, 2029, and as of that date is repealed.
- 17) Makes various findings and declarations.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CCC under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this state. Specifies that the CCC shall be comprised of community college districts (Education Code (EDC) Section 70900)
- 2) Authorizes the CCCCCO to establish a program, named the Rising Scholars Network, to enter into agreements with up to 50 community colleges to provide additional funds for services in support of postsecondary education for justice-involved students, as defined. (EDC Section 70870, et al.)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Purpose.* According to the author, "...previously incarcerated individuals face many barriers in acquiring long-term, stable employment including discriminatory hiring practices and limited access to full-time, well-paying positions. Chronic unemployment amongst the previously incarcerated is directly tied to increased recidivism. Existing programs and policies have made great strides in removing barriers to employment and self-sufficiency for justice-involved Californians, however, the cost of education or career training programs continues to prevent many from taking full advantage of these resources. This bill will help lower that final barrier to quality jobs, upward mobility, and income security for those exiting incarceration. Safe communities provide economic opportunity for all. Recidivism is a symptom of a system that fails to provide opportunities for growth for some of its most vulnerable members."

"In order for formerly-incarcerated Californians to have the best chance at establishing stable employment they need access to low-barrier financial aid and a coordinated pathway from incarceration to career. With over 140 prison and jail facilities across the state and over half a

million justice-involved residents, access to these supports needs to be ensured at the state level. Coordination of both stipend funds and support services will require the cooperation of many entities across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The proper legislative authority is necessary to ensure equitable access to the program for all eligible Californians and that funds are administered appropriately according to state guidelines.”

CCC education offered to inmates. SB 1391 (Hancock), Chapter 695, Statutes of 2014, expanded access to face-to-face community college courses for incarcerated students through collaboration between the CCCs and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Under the initial policy and funding framework of SB 1391, four pilot colleges were selected to offer instruction inside prisons. Subsequently, other colleges were able to leverage resources to provide courses inside state prisons in their local areas. In total, 19 colleges piloted credit-bearing, face-to-face, degree-building education programs at 34 of the 35 CDCR state prisons. Over 5,000 students are enrolled each semester in these courses. The 2018 Budget Act provided new resources (\$5 million one-time) to the CCC to support the creation and expansion of reentry programs for formerly incarcerated persons.

Program growth across higher education. A January 2020 report published jointly by Correction to College and Stanford Law School Criminal Justice Center, *Striving for Success: The Academic Achievements of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Students in California Community Colleges*, documented the growth and efficacy of California’s programs for incarcerated students. It notes that higher education participation among justice-involved student in California has grown exponentially over the past five years, from one private program to 19 community colleges offering face-to-face degree granting courses in nearly all of the state’s 35 prisons, serving almost 6,000 students.

Success programs and student clubs for formerly incarcerated students on campus have also expanded from fewer than 10 to more than 50, serving over 1,000 students in 2019 at University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) campuses and CCCs throughout the state. Additionally, UC Irvine recently launched UC’s first bachelor’s degree program in prison. The program is a partnership with Southwestern Community College and serves as a model for UC-community college collaboration. Within the CSU system, at least two campuses, Cal State Los Angeles and Sacramento State, offer face-to-face baccalaureate programs in the state prisons (Lancaster, Mule Creek and Folsom), with other CSU programs in development including at a women’s prison in Chino. This bill only impacts community colleges.

AB 417 (McCarty), Chapter 558, Statutes of 2021, authorized the CCCCCO to establish a grant program within community colleges called the Rising Scholar Network to provide additional funds for services in support of postsecondary education for formerly and currently incarcerated students. The CCCCCO reports that their Rising Scholar Network serves almost 20,000 justice-involved students both on campus and in prisons, jails, and juvenile detention centers throughout the state. The 2021-22 State Budget appropriated \$10 million in Proposition 98 General Fund to support the Rising Scholars Network.

Committee staff notes that AB 2425 does not seek to duplicate the work of the Rising Scholars Network, but instead provide direct grant resources to Rising Scholars students or those in another dedicated reentry program.

Overtasking CSAC? 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. Arguments in support.

This bill would require CSAC to jointly administer the Hire UP: From Corrections to Career Pilot Program, but otherwise is silent as to the role CSAC would play. *Should the Committee chose to move this bill forward, the author may wish to consider removing CSAC from the provisions of AB 2425.*

Arguments in support. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors wrote in support of AB 2425, noting that "According to the Center for American Progress, it is estimated that between 70 and 100 million Americans, or one in three adults, have a criminal record. In the digital age, this record, no matter how minor, can be the barrier to re-entry, economic stability, and full participation in society. As a result, over incarceration has risen to be one of the main drivers of poverty and racial inequity in the United States. For example, nine in ten employers, four in five landlords, and three in five colleges and universities now use background checks to screen for applicants with criminal records. These resulting barriers to employment, housing, education and other opportunities have made economic stability and mobility a non-starter for millions of families, disproportionately from communities of color. Up to 75 percent of those with a criminal record are still unemployed a year after they exit incarceration."

"...Many credential attainment career pathway programs are full time, making it difficult for participating individuals to attend and graduate if they do not have an alternate source of income. The Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which our Los Angeles County's Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services administers, does not allow for training stipends. AB 2425 would, in part, close this gap by providing stipends while also connecting formerly incarcerated individuals to college credentials and high road career pathways in green-energy, healthcare, construction and infrastructure jobs, among others. This bill will create pipelines to quality jobs, upward mobility, and income security for those exiting incarceration."

Potential amendments. The author and the CCCCCO wrote to the Committee to note that they engaged in conversations about possible amendments. The CCCCCO has suggested the following amendments:

- 1) Amend Rising Scholars language to allow colleges to utilize funds for emergency grants for students. While the CCCCCO has allowed this use in guidance, they indicated that there often needs to be clear statutory direction for CCDs to comfortably engage.
- 2) The pilot could fall under the broad scope of the existing Rising Scholars program and the funds should be open to all participating colleges, as opposed to 10 districts as outlined in the bill.

- 3) The CCCCCO is open to working on a template or guidance for colleges on how students can apply and be eligible for the grants.

The CCCCCO noted that, while their proposed alternative does move away from a new program, they believe it could achieve more direct support for students in a more streamlined way. The CCCCCO noted that, like CSAC, a challenge they face is that they have neither the infrastructure nor staffing capacity in place to create or administer a large new program. Both the author and CCCCCO indicated their commitment to working on this issue moving forward.

Prior legislation. AB 417 (McCarty), Chapter 558, Statutes of 2021, authorized the CCCCCO to establish a grant program within community colleges called the Rising Scholar Network to provide additional funds for services in support of postsecondary education for formerly and currently incarcerated students.

SB 416 (Hueso) Chapter 766, Statutes of 2021, requires CDCR, subject to an appropriation by the Legislature, to offer college programs provided by the various California college systems or other regionally accredited, nonprofit colleges or universities in the state to state prison inmates with a GED certificate or a high school diploma, establishes a set of criteria to be used to prioritize those college programs, and defines the responsibilities of those college education providers.

AB 2341 (McCarty, 2020) was nearly identical to AB 417 (McCarty, detailed above), and was held in the Senate Education Committee.

SB 1391 (Hancock), Chapter 695, Statutes of 2014, allowed California CCCs to receive full funding for credit-course instruction offered in correctional institutions and sought to expand the offering of such courses.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Antelope Valley Community College District
California Association of Local Conservation Corps
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ)
County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
Initiate Justice
Los Angeles Community College District
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
Palo Verde Community College District
San Diego Community College District
San Jose-evergreen Community College District
Yuba Community College District

Opposition

None on file.

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