

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 1703 (Bloom) – As Amended April 10, 2019

SUBJECT: University of California: California Collaborative for Neurodiversity and Learning

SUMMARY: Establishes, subject to appropriation, a collaborative between the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) to apply brain research to the diverse learning needs of children in K-12 education. Specifically, **this bill, as proposed to be amended:**

- 1) Establishes the UC and CSU Collaborative for Neurodiversity and Learning, with the goal of bringing together leading experts in brain research and K-12 education to strengthen educational support and new teaching methods for children with diverse learning needs, including children with dyslexia and literacy issues.
- 2) Provides that the collaborative consists of UCLA and CSU Dominguez Hills, along with other CSU campuses serving the Los Angeles Basin, as selected by the CSU Trustees.
- 3) Requires the collaborative to do all of the following:
 - a) Develop a network of brain researchers and educators to share new knowledge on neurodiversity;
 - b) Identify and develop links between brain research and classroom practice;
 - c) Create a framework for embedding neurodiversity knowledge into the teacher education programs at UC and CSU; and,
 - d) Provide an opportunity for innovative experts in neuroscience and education to collaborate and develop new approaches for teaching and learning based on knowledge gained from brain research around learning differences, such as dyslexia.
- 4) Requires the collaborative to also:
 - a) Provide leadership - on the development, testing, and evaluation of educational practices based on brain research - at California public schools volunteering to participate, in order to identify the most effective practices for neurodiverse learners, and to support the creation of professional development modules for teachers related to such practices;
 - b) Support the development of a teacher training curriculum to be integrated into programs leading to a preliminary teaching credential; and,
 - c) Select public postsecondary educational institutions to voluntarily participate in implementing and testing the effects of the teacher training curriculum.
- 5) Stipulates that all of the above is subject to an appropriation in the Budget Act and shall not apply to UC except to the extent the UC Regents adopt a resolution making it applicable.

- 6) Make legislative findings and declarations regarding the prevalence of learning differences, related to the uniqueness individuals' brain wiring, and the need for early and effective intervention to address these differences.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes UC, to be administered by the Board of Regents, with full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to insure the security of its funds and compliance with the terms of the endowments of the university and such competitive bidding procedures as may be made applicable to the university by statute for the letting of construction contracts, sales of real property, and purchasing of materials, goods, and services. (California Constitution Article IX, Section 9)
- 2) Establishes the CSU, governed by the Board of Trustees with respect to educational policy, finance, employee relations, campus planning, and facilities, among other areas. (Education Code Section 89500, et seq.).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Background.* According to information provided by the author's office, one in five children in the U.S. have learning and attention issues according to the National Center for Learning Disabilities. The most frequent learning issue is related to literacy. Dyslexia is estimated to affect roughly 15 percent of the U.S. population, meaning about one million children in California schools have a literacy-related learning disability.

Up until third grade, students generally work on mastering basic reading skills, but after third grade, children need strong reading and learning skills to build content knowledge in subjects like history or science. Children who do not read well in third grade are then four times more likely to leave high school without a regular diploma, as compared to proficient readers.

Without early identification and effective intervention, the impact of learning issues can be significant and long-lasting for the individual, and for society. The long-term effects include social costs - unemployment, mental health problems, welfare costs, and ongoing remedial education programs – as well as costs incurred due to antisocial behavior such as drug abuse, early pregnancy, and involvement in the criminal justice system. Low literacy is strongly related to crime: 70% of prisoners fall into the lowest two levels of reading proficiency (National Institute for Literacy, 1998).

Children with neurodiverse learning needs have the capacity to be highly successful, but the author maintains that they are not being adequately supported in today's classrooms. Great progress has been made in understanding neurodiversity on a scientific level, including the cognitive and neurobiological bases of diverse learning needs, and this research can now inform teaching methods to better support the success of all types of learners.

Purpose. AB 1703 is intended bring together California's leading brain science and K-12 education experts for a collaborative venture using emerging knowledge to inform the creation of innovative teaching methods for application throughout the K-12 system. The proposed collaborative, which will be led by UCLA and Cal State Dominguez Hills, will focus on three areas:

1. Increasing language and concept development for children 0 to 5 years of age by working with California's early childhood programs.
2. Assessing children at age 5 for literacy issues with teachers trained to give targeted intervention in the primary grades.
3. Development of fluent comprehension by grade 4, by designing professional development for all current teachers and by creating new foundational literacy components to be embedded into teacher education programs.

Amendments. The author concurs with amendments proposed by the committee, and reflected in this analysis, which make the bill somewhat less prescriptive or are clarifying. *For timing purposes, these amendments will be taken in the Appropriations Committee.*

Comment. Notwithstanding the apparent merits of this measure, creation of the collaborative will be dependent on the Legislature's funding priorities, as established through the annual budget process.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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