

Date of Hearing: March 14, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 214 (Weber) – As Introduced January 24, 2017

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

SUBJECT: Postsecondary education: student hunger.

SUMMARY: Requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to provide written notice to recipients of Cal Grant awards who qualify for participation in the CalFresh program; and, provides clarity to existing policies and definitions in order to simplify the administration of CalFresh for college students. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Finds and declares all of the following:
 - a) According to the California State University (CSU), one in five CSU students experiences chronic hunger and one in 10 experiences homelessness;
 - b) In a survey recently conducted by the University of California (UC) Regents, it was found that one in 10 UC students do not have access to adequate food or nutrition;
 - c) Nationwide, one-half of all community college students are struggling with housing or food insecurity;
 - d) It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to reduce the incidence of hunger and homelessness among college students in California; and,
 - e) It is the intent of the Legislature to clarify educational policies for purposes of improving access for low-income students to the CalFresh program established pursuant to Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 18900) of Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.
- 2) Specifies that a student shall be determined to be attending at least half-time any semester or term in which he or she enrolls in at least half of the number of credits needed each semester or term to graduate within four years of enrollment as a first-time freshman, or within two years of enrollment as a transfer student, unless prohibited by federal law.
- 3) Requires CSAC to notify, in writing, any recipient of a Cal Grant award whose grant includes any amount of funding that has been derived from the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) block grant or state match in order for the student to verify that he or she qualifies for the exemption from the CalFresh program student eligibility rules, as specified.
- 4) Specifies that "on-campus food vendors" does not include any vendor that does not sell prepared food for onsite consumption or that sells food from a mobile food facility, as defined in Section 113831 of the Health and Safety Code.
- 5) Defines "qualifying food facility" as a facility that sells prepared food for onsite consumption.

- 6) Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to maintain the list of programs identified by the workgroup established, as specified, because they meet the standard set in Section 273.5(b)(11) of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, which provides that a student is eligible for an exemption from the CalFresh program's eligibility rules if the student's attendance can be described as part of a program to increase the student's employability. Specifies that these programs shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, all of the following:
 - a) The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP);
 - b) College Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS);
 - c) Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE);
 - d) The McNair Scholars programs of the UC;
 - e) The Puente Project of the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellor's Office and the UC;
 - f) The Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) programs of the CCC;
 - g) The Guardian Scholar programs of the UC, the CSU, and the CCC;
 - h) The Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI) of the CCC Chancellor's Office;
 - i) The Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support (CAFYES) Program established by Section 79220 of the Education Code;
 - j) The Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program of CSAC; and,
 - k) Any program or curriculum supported by the California Fostering Connections to Success Act.
- 7) Requires CDSS to issue and maintain instructions for county human services agencies to verify exemptions to the CalFresh student eligibility rules for students who participate in the programs identified, as specified, students who are approved and anticipate participating in state or federal work-study, or students who meet one of the qualifications for exemptions as enumerated in two and three above.
- 8) Specifies that to the extent allowed by federal law, a student shall be considered to be "anticipating participation" in workstudy if he or she can reasonably expect or foresee being assigned a workstudy job, and a student shall be deemed to be "anticipating participation" in workstudy until he or she receives notice from the institution of higher education that he or she has been denied participation in workstudy.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Stipulates that each public or private postsecondary educational institution that is located in a county that participates in the Restaurant Meals Program established pursuant to Section 2020 of Title 7 of the United States Code (U.S.C.) shall do all of the following: 1) apply to become an approved food vendor for the Restaurant Meals Program, if the institution

operates any qualifying food facility on campus; 2) annually provide all on-campus food vendors not operated by the institution with information regarding the Restaurant Meals Program and the manner in which to apply; and, 3) if an on-campus food vendor has been approved to participate in the Restaurant Meals Program, annually inform students about the program using information provided by the State Department of Social Services. Specifies that an institution is not required to create, operate, or maintain an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system on behalf of on-campus food vendors; and, that an approved food vendor participating in the Restaurant Meals Program as specified, and a county in which the program is operated, shall meet the requirements of the Restaurant Meals Program (Education Code (EC) Section 66025.93).

- 2) Authorizes the Cal Grant Program, administered by the CSAC, to provide grants to financially needy students to attend college. The Cal Grant programs include both the entitlement and the competitive Cal Grant awards. The Program consists of the Cal Grant A, Cal Grant B, and Cal Grant C programs; eligibility is based upon financial need, grade point average, residency, and other eligibility criteria, as specified (Education Code (EC) Section 69430, et seq.).
- 3) Requires institutions to meet specified criteria in order to participate in the Cal Grant Program, as specified (EC Section 69432.7).
- 4) Establishes the Emergency Food Assistance Program within the State Treasury (EFAP) within the State Treasury; and, authorizes the Controller to transfer from the Personal Income Tax Fund to the EFAP Fund not in excess of the sum of the amounts designated by individuals, as specified (Revenue and Taxation Code Section 18852).
- 5) Establishes the EBT Act, and defines the EBT system as the program designed to provide benefits to those eligible to receive public assistance benefits such as CalWORKs and CalFresh (Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 10065, et seq.).
- 6) Establishes that an EBT recipient may be charged a fee for cash withdrawal transactions that exceed four per month, as specified, by state and federal law and customarily charged to other customers (WIC Section 10072).
- 7) Establishes under federal law the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) pursuant to the Food Stamp Act of 1964; and, establishes in California statute, the CalFresh program to administer the provision of federal SNAP benefits to families and individuals meeting certain criteria, as specified (WIC Section 18900, et seq.).
- 8) Establishes the Restaurant Meals Program under SNAP to allow eligible homeless, disabled, or elderly recipients to purchase hot, prepared food from participating restaurants (7 U.S.C. Section 2020).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: *Background.* A growing number of college students are enrolled in SNAP, but few students who receive SNAP benefits can purchase food on college campuses. According to a December 2015 report, by Wisconsin Hope Lab, entitled, "Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food and Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates," of a survey of more than 4,000 undergraduates at 10 community colleges across the nation, half of all of the respondents reported that they

struggle with food and/or housing insecurity. The report also found that 20 percent of the student respondents indicated that they are hungry.

Additionally, according to the 2016 CSU study, "Serving Displaced and Food Insecure Students in the CSU", 24 percent of CSU students experience hunger and 12 percent experience homelessness. Further, the 2016 University of California Student Association study, "A Plate at the Table," found that per a survey conducted by the UC Regents, nearly one in five UC students do not have access to adequate food or nutrition. Lastly, according to the Community College Equity Assessment Lab's 2017 report, "Struggling to Survive – Striving to Succeed – Food and Housing Insecurities in the Community College," data derived from a subsample of 3,647 students from various CCC campuses, found that 12.2 percent of students experienced food insecurity and 32.8 percent housing insecurity.

Purpose of this measure. According to the author, "As more and more students continue to pursue a post-secondary education, hunger and homelessness among college students is also on the rise. This obstacle often hinders a student's success in college while increasing the likelihood of an incomplete post-secondary education. With all that California has invested in higher education, students continue to face challenges to attend or continuing to attend California's colleges and universities. AB 214 would build upon previous legislation to address the growing crisis of hunger on California's college campuses."

The author contends that, "AB 214 is the next step and will further improve access to federal anti-hunger benefits for California's low-income college students by clarifying policies and definitions to simplify the administration of CalFresh for college students. This bill will bring attention to this growing issue and provide solutions to help alleviate hunger for college students throughout California."

Existing efforts on public postsecondary campuses. The UC has made tackling the issue of student hunger a priority. The UC launched the Global Food Initiative, and in March 2015, the UC President allocated \$75,000 per campus to support the effort; looking inward, ensuring that its own students have food security, as it takes on the bigger issue of hunger around the world. Systemwide, UC campuses have surveyed students in order to assess the scope of food security issues and have begun implementing short-term relief where needed as campuses explore long-term solutions that address student nutrition. Many UC campuses have food pantries and partner with local food banks.

The CSU Chancellor commissioned in February 2015, a study to shed light on how CSU campuses were meeting the needs of displaced and food insecure students and to offer recommendations to ensure success and graduation for these students. Many CSU campuses have programs for food insecure students, ranging from small food pantries to large programs and services.

Committee staff understands that the CCC does not have a systemwide plan to help combat student food insecurities issues; however, some CCC campuses have varying plans in place to help address the hunger needs of the students.

Previous legislation. AB 1747 (Weber), Chapter 290, Statutes of 2016, which, among others, required a public or private postsecondary education institution located in a county that participates in the Restaurant Meals Program to increase access to and provide information about the program, as specified; and, required CDSS to act as the state entity for receipt of federal

reimbursement on behalf of an organization, institution, or agency that secures funds for CalFresh outreach activities, as specified.

AB 1930 (Skinner), Chapter 729, Statutes of 2014, which, among others, tasked DSS to conduct a workgroup in order to seek ways to reduce barriers to students applying for CalFresh.

AB 832 (Weber) of 2013, which was held in the Assembly Human Services Committee, would have required all convenience stores and bookstores at UC, CSU and the CCC to accept the use of EBT cards.

AB 756 (Mitchell) of 2011, which died in the Assembly Human Services Committee, would have prohibited surcharges on ATM withdrawals and point-of-sale transactions for CalWORKs recipients when using their state-issued EBT cards.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs
 California Association of Code Enforcement Officers
 California Association of Food Banks
 California College and University Police Chiefs Association
 California Federation of Teachers
 California Narcotic Officers Association
 California State Student Association (co-sponsor)
 Children Now
 Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations (co-sponsor)
 Courage Campaign
 Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
 Feeding San Diego
 Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano County
 Los Angeles County Professional Peace Officers Association
 Los Angeles Police Protective League
 Orange County Food Access Coalition
 Riverside Sheriffs' Association
 Student Senate for California Community Colleges (co-sponsor)
 Western Center on Law and Poverty (co-sponsor)
 Yolo Food Bank
 Young Invincibles, West Coast (co-sponsor)
 An individual

Opposition

None on file

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