
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: AB 2056
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Urgency: No
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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Cal Grant Program: graduation verification

SUMMARY

This bill requires the California Student Aid Commission (Commission), if it requires the verification of high school graduation to be submitted electronically—as permitted under current law, for purposes of meeting the eligibility requirements for a Cal Grant award, to provide guidance to school districts so the verification of graduation is submitted as soon as possible but no later than August 31st, as specified.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Authorizes the Cal Grant program, administered by the Commission, to provide grants to financially needy students to attend a college or university. 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, and eligibility is based upon financial need, grade point average (GPA), California residency and other criteria. (Education Code § 69430-69433)
- 2) Prohibits school districts from permitting access to student records without written parental consent but makes some exceptions, as specified. School districts may release information from student records to agencies or organizations in connection with the application of a pupil for, or receipt of, financial aid. However, information permitting the personal identification of a pupil or his or her parents, may be disclosed only as necessary for the purpose to determine the eligibility of the pupil for financial aid, to determine the amount of the financial aid, to determine the conditions that will be imposed regarding the financial aid, or to enforce the terms or conditions of the financial aid. (EC § 49076)
- 3) Authorizes the Commission to require that GPAs be submitted electronically for all high school seniors attending public schools unless the student or parent opts out. (EC § 69432.9)
- 4) Authorizes the Commission to require verification of high school graduation or equivalent to be submitted electronically for all grade 12 pupils who graduated from public schools in the prior academic year, except for pupils that have opted

out. Establishes legislative intent that high schools verify graduation of their pupils in time to meet the applicable deadline. (EC § 69432.92)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires the California Student Aid Commission (Commission), if it requires the verification of high school graduation to be electronically submitted--as allowed under current law, for purposes of meeting eligibility requirements for a Cal Grant award, to provide guidance to school districts so the verification is submitted as soon as possible but no later than August 31 following the students' graduation.
- 2) Specifies that its provisions also apply to students who graduate during the summer following grade 12.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** Graduation, among other things, from a California high school is required for a Cal Grant award. This requirement needs to be verified, before an award is paid and late submission could delay payment of a Cal Grant award. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, in a support letter states, the verification of graduation for many students who attend summer school in order to meet high graduation requirements, is either never received by the Commission or it is submitted after the Cal Grant application deadline resulting in delays of Cal Grant award payments. This bill seeks to ensure that all high school graduates are reported to the Commission resulting in timely Cal Grant award payments.
- 2) ***Existing process for verification.*** Typically, a student in high school is notified of his or her Cal Grant award during grade 12. Current law authorizes the Commission to require verification of high school graduation to be submitted electronically for purposes of meeting the eligibility requirements for a Cal Grant award. According to the Commission, graduation verification is submitted to the Commission in a variety of ways, each of which has its own unique challenges.
 - a) ***Schools and school districts.*** Some high schools and schools districts submit verification of high school graduation directly to the Commission. Other districts submit the information through the California Department of Education. In both cases, however, the Commission may not receive the data within the time frame needed to process a timely Cal Grant award payment.
 - b) ***Students.*** If the Commission has not received verification from either the college or school, a student can self-certify through the Commission's Web site. However, most students are not aware of this process or may become aware after an award payment is missed.
 - c) ***Some universities.*** Depending on where a student is enrolled the University may verify graduation. This is not the case for colleges where

graduation from high school is not a requirement like at the California Community Colleges.

The variation in the submission process could unintentionally exclude students who need to be verified soon after graduation. As mentioned, under current law the Commission may require verification of high school graduation to be submitted electronically. This bill goes further by requiring the Commission to provide guidance to schools and school districts so as to ensure students' are verified as soon as possible but no later than the end of summer (August 31). This process may provide clarity and potentially reduce late Cal Grant award payments.

SUPPORT

Association of California School Administrators
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
California Student Aid Commission

OPPOSITION

None received.

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