
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 584 **Hearing Date:** June 28, 2017
Author: Quirk-Silva
Version: April 4, 2017
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez

Subject: Student financial aid: California Student Opportunity and Access Program: Orange County

SUMMARY

This bill requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to ensure that at least one California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) consortium is established in Orange County.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Authorizes CSAC as the administrators of Cal-SOAP, to apportion funds on a progress payment schedule for the support of projects designed to increase the accessibility of postsecondary educational opportunities for any of the following elementary and secondary school pupils:
 - Students who are from low-income families.
 - Students who would be the first in their families to attend college.
 - Students who are from schools or geographic regions with documented low-eligibility or college participation rates.
 - Pupils who are homeless youth, as specified.
- 2) Requires that the projects be proposed and operated through a consortium that involves at least one secondary school district office, at least one four-year college or university, at least one community college, and at least one agency, as specified.
- 3) Authorizes CSAC to develop additional regulations regarding the awarding of project grants and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the individual projects (Education Code § 69561).

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to ensure that at least one California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) consortium is established in Orange County.
- 2) Requires CSAC to retain authority over the established consortium in Orange County.
- 3) Makes the provisions of this bill contingent upon sufficient funding provided for in the annual Budget Act or other statute.
- 4) Makes legislative findings and declarations that a special law is necessary and that a general law cannot be made applicable because of the unique needs of the students of Orange County.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, “Orange County students overall, outscore, outperform, and outrank the state average on standardized testing and other measures of achievement, but minority students in the Anaheim, Garden Grove, and Santa Ana school districts are far more likely to drop out of high school than their Caucasian peers, with graduation rates hovering below the state average of 82%. In fact, Latinos represent 75% of the students who drop out of high school in Orange County. This education achievement gap is fueled by family and community poverty, language and cultural barriers, lack of advocacy, and limited education support outside of a stressed school system. Given these reasons, it is more crucial than ever that we provide a high quality education for students and provide students with resources in order to support a well prepared workforce, safer communities, and a thriving economy.”
- 2) **Cal-SOAP.** Cal-SOAP’s 14 inter-segmental consortia provide services directly to students and middle and high schools designed to increase the availability of information on postsecondary schooling and work opportunities. These consortia also work to raise the achievement levels of these students so as to increase the number of high school graduates eligible to pursue postsecondary learning opportunities. Cal-SOAP serves students in more than 300 elementary, middle, and high school campuses in 25 California counties. Collectively the 14 Cal-SOAP consortia annually serve over 120,000 students who had the greatest need. Cal-SOAP serves students who are first in their families to attend college and who are from schools or regions with documented low college participation rates. This program is administered by CSAC, which is the public agency responsible for allocating all state financial aid and for providing state financial aid information to students, counselors, high schools and community groups.
- 3) **Cal-SOAP fiscal challenges.** Challenges to program expansion and the addition of counties appear to be largely fiscal. According to a recent Cal-SOAP external evaluation, state funding does not appear adequate to fully fund Cal-SOAP’s existing needs. The evaluation notes that any reduction or reallocation of Cal-SOAP funding to new or existing projects would lead to cutbacks on current services provided by existing Cal-SOAP locations. This bill’s provisions are contingent upon sufficient funding provided for in the annual Budget Act or

another statute. The budget provides roughly \$7.7 million for about 14 California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) consortia. However, new funding to expand the program was not proposed in this year's budget.

- 4) **Things to consider.** This bill requires California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to establish a new program in Orange County. Staff notes the existing 14 consortium counties are not specified in statute. Rather than listing a standalone county in statute and in the event that funding becomes available, should state policy focus on broadening the proposal to allow for other regions that have similar needs to participate in the program? Staff understands that statutory authority is not required for CSAC to establish a new Cal-SOAP consortium. However, funding is needed. Expanding the Cal-SOAP program appears to be a budgetary issue.

SUPPORT

California Student Aid Commission

OPPOSITION

None received

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