
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: SB 1275 **Hearing Date:** April 4, 2018
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Version: April 2, 2018
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez

Subject: Public postsecondary education: Plan Against College Hunger Act of 2018

SUMMARY

This bill creates the Plan Against College Hunger Act of 2018 and establishes, under the administration of the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), a new grant award program for a student who is Cal Grant eligible for the purpose of preventing hunger among students at public postsecondary educational institutions.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Authorizes the Cal Grant program, administered by the CSAC, 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 B, and Cal Grant C programs, and eligibility is based upon financial need, grade point average, California residency and other criteria. (Education Code § 69430-69433.9)
- 2) Requires the CSAC to notify Cal Grant recipients who qualify for participation in the CalFresh program and provides clarity to existing policies and definitions in order to simplify CalFresh administration for college students. (EC § 69519.3)
- 3) Requires each public and private postsecondary education institution that is located in a county that participates in the Restaurant Meals Program to apply to become an approved food vendor for participation in this program. (EC § 66025.93)
- 4) Establishes, until January 1, 2022, "hunger-free campus," designation requirements which include, designating an employee to help students enroll in CalFresh, having an on-campus food pantry and meal sharing program as described. A campus that meets those requirements is eligible for a funding incentive upon appropriation of the Legislature. (EC § 66027.8)

ANALYSIS

This bill creates the Plan Against College Hunger Act of 2018, specifically it,

- 1) Establishes the Plan Against College Hunger program, under the administration of the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), for purposes of preventing hunger among students at public postsecondary education institutions.
- 2) Authorizes the program to provide an award to a Cal Grant eligible student attending a public postsecondary institution at least half-time.
- 3) Requires the CSAC to:
 - a) Provide awards to eligible students equal to the amount of the cost of a meal plan that would cover 10 meals per week.
 - b) Annually adjust the amount of the award.
 - c) Issue the award at the same time as Cal Grant awards are issued.
- 4) Specifies that the provisions relative to the program do not require a public postsecondary education institution to provide a student meal plan to any student.
- 5) Defines various terms for the purpose of the bill.
- 6) Prohibits an award received under the program from being considered as income for the purpose of determining eligibility in any state or county administered needs-tested financial aid or public benefit.
- 7) Provides that the program requirements are not operative unless funding has been appropriated for that purpose in the annual Budget Act or another statute.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “food insecurity and chronic hunger are rampant on college campuses throughout California. The CalFresh Program is limited in its reach due to a federal rule which makes non-exempt students ineligible for aid. Food Pantries, though increasing in their prevalence on college campuses, can only go so far to address the problem. Big, bold initiatives are necessary to address the crisis of food insecurity among students with the urgency it deserves.” This bill seeks to address food insecurity among college students by establishing a new grant award program for a Cal Grant eligible student attending a public postsecondary institution.
- 2) ***Award amount?*** Under this measure, CSAC would be responsible for calculating the award amount. The bill specifies that the amount of the award is equal to the cost of a meal plan that would cover 10 meals per week. College meal plans vary from campus to campus and among each segment. For example a 10-meal-per-week plan for the 2017-18 academic year at the California State University, Sacramento is approximately \$3,912 and \$2,813 at Cal State LA. At the community colleges, the Chancellor’s Office estimates that a 10-meal-per-week plan to be about \$1,920 per year. The UC estimates the average meal plan to be roughly \$4,000. It’s unclear if the award amount would be quantified for

each campus or be based on a systemwide average. It appears that this determination would be left to California Student Aid Commission (CSAC).

3) ***Existing efforts addressing college hunger on public campuses.***

The University of California (UC) launched the Global Food Initiative, and in March 2014, the President of the UC allocated \$377,000 per campus to fund efforts in research, student support services, educational programming and engagement. These efforts, among other things, have resulted in the creation or expansion of food pantry and distribution services on each UC campus, available to all students with need and the creation of undergraduate campus dining meal donation programs.

The California State University (CSU), Chancellor's Office affirms that all 23 campuses have a food pantry or food distribution program, a majority of campuses offer meals through meal sharing or meal voucher programs and five of the CSU campuses accept Electronic Benefit Transfer with additional campuses in development.

At the community colleges, the Chancellor's Office reports that various systemwide efforts are underway to coordinate CalFresh enrollment on campuses for students, this includes training faculty and staff and partnering with the California Association of Food Banks to bring outreach workers onto campuses to support students with CalFresh enrollment. The Chancellor's office also coordinates with the California Association of Food Banks to leverage low cost food to stock campus food pantries. Strategies to identify and promote best practices are also ongoing.

Each segment participates in intersegmental Higher Education Basic Needs workgroup designed to improve coordination and share evidence-based practices to address student needs around food and housing. The Budget Act of 2017 provides \$2.5 million to UC, CSU and California Community Colleges (CCC) to support some of the work mentioned in the above paragraphs, specifically to support student enrollment in CalFresh, establishes on-campus food pantries and meal sharing programs.

4) ***Total cost of education is more than tuition.*** The state's Cal Grant program provides college access for low-income Californians by covering tuition and some non-tuition costs (Cal Grant B access award \$1,672). Students must meet income and assets standards established under current law. Conversations about college affordability and improving financial aid in California have revolved around helping financially needy families offset the total cost of education beyond tuition. Students incur attendance costs for books, supplies and living expenses (food and housing). According to the CSAC, "non-tuition" costs exceed \$18,000 annually for CCC students living independently. Additionally, research by, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) reveals a student's ability to pay the full cost of attendance is an important factor in his or her success. TICAS notes, a student who cannot afford to fully cover access costs such as textbooks, transportation, food, and housing may make choices that undermine their ability to complete their education. For example, they may need to work more hours at

the expense of studying. In response to this need, the state has increased efforts to provide additional aid specifically to cover living expense.

- 5) **Things to consider.** This bill establishes a separate grant aid program to address a specific need, food insecurity. A student must meet criteria for Cal Grant eligibility and it appears that the award could be used for other non-tuition costs. The proposed program would be administered by California Student Aid Commission, also administers the Cal Grant program. *Is creating a new aid program necessary? Could a similar goal be reached by increasing the Cal Grant B access award amount which is designed to cover non-tuition costs (i.e. living expenses and expenses for transportation, supplies, and books)?* Proponents of this measure argue the that issue of college hunger is escalated and the response should be intentional and targeted for that purpose.
- 6) **Author's Amendments.** The author wishes, staff agrees, that the bill be amended as follows:

(3) All students attending a public postsecondary educational institution with an enrollment status of half-time or more and who are eligible for a **Cal Grant Cal Grant B award** pursuant to Chapter 1.7 (commencing with Section 69430), shall be eligible for an award under the program.

(4) A student eligible for the program shall receive an award from the commission equal to the amount of the cost of a meal plan that would cover 10 meals per week **in each sector, as determined by the Commission annually.**

~~(5) The commission shall annually adjust the amount of the award to be issued by the program.~~

SUPPORT

Alliance for Children's Rights
 Western Center on Law and Poverty
 A Jewish Response to Hunger
 Young Invincibles, West Coast
 National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
 Alliance for Children's Rights

OPPOSITION

None received

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