
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair

2019 - 2020 Regular

Bill No:	SB 728	Hearing Date:	April 24, 2019
Author:	Galgiani		
Version:	March 27, 2019		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Lynn Lorber		

Subject: Student financial aid: housing and hunger hardship.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Student Housing and Food Hardship Fund for the California Student Aid Commission to establish a program under which students attending a public postsecondary educational institution who are experiencing housing or food hardship may apply for emergency assistance.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Trustees of the California State University, and encourages the Regents of the University of California, to designate as a “hunger free campus” each of its respective campuses that have all of the following:
 - a) A campus employee designated to help ensure that students have the information that they need to enroll in CalFresh.
 - b) An on-campus food pantry or regular food distributions on campus.
 - c) A meal sharing program that allows students to voluntarily donate their unused meal plan credits to be distributed for use by students in need to access dining halls or to support an on-campus food pantry.
 - d) A campus employee designated annually as a point-of-contact to work with student volunteers to assist students.
- 2) Requires the governing board of each community college district that chooses to participate to designate as a “hunger free campus” each of its campuses that have both of the following:
 - a) A campus employee designated to help ensure that students have the information that they need to enroll in CalFresh.
 - b) An on-campus food pantry or regular food distributions on campus.
- 3) Requires each campus that receives a “hunger free campus” designation to receive a funding incentive upon appropriation by the Legislature.

- 4) Requires the State Lands Commission to deposit specified revenue in the General Fund, and requires, out of those funds deposited in the General Fund, sufficient moneys to be made available each fiscal year for specified purposes (such as payment of refunds and expenditures, payments to cities and counties, and to implement the coastal hazard and legacy oil and gas well removal and remediation program). (Public Resources Code § 6217)

ANALYSIS

This bill establishes the Student Housing and Food Hardship Fund (Fund) for the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to establish a program under which students attending a public postsecondary educational institution who are experiencing housing or food hardship may apply for emergency assistance. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Establishes the Fund in the State Treasury.
- 2) Requires that moneys in the Fund are to be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to the CSAC to establish a program under which students attending a public postsecondary educational institution who are experiencing housing or food hardship may apply for emergency assistance.
- 3) Requires funds that were deposited in the General Fund by the State Lands Commission and that are remaining after specified purposes have been funded to be transferred to the Fund.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “Food and housing insecurity is a persistent problem in California’s higher education system. Over 50 percent of California State University students face food or housing insecurity – including 11 percent facing homelessness within the last year. Nearly 60 percent of community college students surveyed have difficulty meeting their basic needs each week. We must focus on all possible efforts to help eliminate this issue.”
- 2) ***Program administration.*** This bill establishes the Fund for the CSAC to establish a program under which students attending a public postsecondary educational institution who are experiencing housing or food hardship may apply for emergency assistance. According to the author’s office, the intent is to have the CSAC administer this program in a way that operates as a grant program, similar to the Cal Grant program, rather than have the segments or campuses of the public postsecondary educational institutions administer this program.
- 3) ***What is a housing or food hardship?*** This bill establishes a Fund for the development of a program under which students attending a public postsecondary educational institution who are experiencing housing or food hardship may apply for emergency assistance. This bill does not provide a definition of or parameters for what constitutes a hardship, an application process, or how a hardship would be documented or verified. According to the author’s office, such decisions would be made by the CSAC.

- 4) **Funding source.** Current law requires the State Lands Commission to deposit specified revenue in the General Fund, and requires, out of those funds deposited in the General Fund, sufficient moneys to be made available each fiscal year for specified purposes (such as payment of refunds and expenditures, payments to cities and counties, and to implement the coastal hazard and legacy oil and gas well removal and remediation program). This bill requires funds that have been deposited in the General Fund by the State Lands Commission, and that are remaining after specified purposes have been funded, to be transferred to the Student Housing and Food Hardship Fund (Fund).

Presumably, funds that have been deposited in the General Fund are currently being appropriated for specified purposes. It appears this bill would result in the redirection of funds that are currently utilized for other purposes.

Staff notes that there are many proposals to expand financial aid to cover the total cost of attendance, which may be available to help cover housing costs.

- 5) **Existing efforts.** There are several systemwide and campus-based efforts to meet the housing and hunger needs of students. Examples include:
- a) The California State University (CSU) has a Basic Needs Initiative that includes an emergency housing or vouchers for off-campus housing, assistance with long-term housing arrangements, and emergency grants or funds.
 - b) The University of California's (UC) Student Housing Initiative plans to add 14,000 new affordable beds by 2020; approximately 3, 600 below-market beds have already been identified.
 - c) The Hunger Free Campus Initiative was launched following its funding in the 2017-18 Budget Act (see # 6 below).
- 6) **Related Budget activity.** SB 85 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 23, 2017) established the "hunger free campus" program and appropriated \$2.5 million to the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges to provide grants to community college districts to be used to address student hunger at community colleges.

The Governor's 2019-20 Budget proposes:

- a) \$15 million ongoing General Fund to augment the UC's existing efforts to address student hunger and housing needs.
 - b) \$15 million one-time General Fund for the CSU to support its Basic Needs Initiative, and to develop an emergency housing pilot program to provide temporary housing to students who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- 7) **Related legislation.** SB 568 (Portantino, 2019) establishes, contingent upon an appropriation, the College-Focused Rapid Rehousing Program to provide

housing options for homeless college and university students and to ensure that policies are in place at California's public postsecondary education systems to support students experiencing homelessness in transitioning into stable housing and remaining enrolled in college. SB 568 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 806 (Bloom, 2019) expands existing priority enrollment for homeless youth to also include formerly homeless youth, and removes the sunset on this priority, thereby extending it into perpetuity. AB 806 is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 302 (Berman, 2019) requires the governing board of the community college district, if it has parking facilities on a campus, to grant overnight access to those facilities to any homeless student for the purpose of sleeping in the student's vehicle overnight, provided that the student is enrolled in coursework, has paid enrollment fees if not waived, and is in good standing with the community college district without requiring the student to enroll in additional courses. AB 302 is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 943 (Chiu, 2019) authorizes up to \$25,000 per campus in Student Equity funds to be used for emergency student financial assistance to help an eligible student overcome unforeseen financial challenges that would directly impact the student's ability to persist in the student's course of study. AB 943 provides that these challenges include, but are not necessarily limited to, the immediate need for shelter or food. Each community college district and campus is encouraged to consider the unique characteristics of its student body in developing specific guidelines for further defining what constitutes an unforeseen financial challenge for its students. AB 943 is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 150 (Beall, 2019) relaxes a component of the eligibility requirements for the Chafee Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV) program to allow recipients to continue to be eligible for the award while failing to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress for two consecutive years. If a student is failing to meet satisfactory academic progress after the second or third academic semester, this bill requires students to work with an advisor to develop an educational improvement plan as a condition of Chafee funds being released for that semester. This bill also establishes processes for appeal and reinstatement for an awardee who loses Chafee eligibility. This bill authorizes the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to make initial award offers for the Chafee ETV program that totals up to 200 percent of the total program funds available for all awards. SB 150 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

- 8) **Prior legislation.** AB 1468 (Chiu, 2017) was similar in nature to AB 943 (Chiu, 2019). AB 1468 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 307 (Nguyen, 2017) among other things, requested the University of California (UC) Regents to convene a task force, consisting of three UC representatives selected by the Regents, three representatives of the California State University (CSU) selected by the CSU Trustees, and three representatives of the California Community Colleges (CCC) selected by the CCC Board of

Governors, to conduct a study to determine the extent, causes, and effects of housing insecurity and homelessness of current postsecondary students in this state. SB 307 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 2822 (Chiu, 2016) among other things, required the community colleges Chancellor's Office to provide guidelines for community college districts or campuses that seek to establish student emergency aid programs among the services they provide. AB 2822 passed both houses of the legislature but was not heard on the Assembly Floor for concurrence at the request of the author.

SUPPORT

None received

OPPOSITION

None received

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