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May 6, 2019

The Honorable Connie Leyva
State Capitol, Room 4061
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: SB 291, California Community College Student Financial Aid Program (Leyva, as of 03/01/19)

Position: Support if Amended

Dear Senator Leyva,

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges wishes to express its support for SB 291 (Leyva, as of 1 March 2019), which would "establish the California Community College Student Financial Aid Program, to provide need-based grant awards to eligible community college students who attend an eligible California community college, as specified," if the bill is amended to ensure that the Student Aid Commission provides the oversight of financial aid. This position represents the collective judgment of the 60,000 faculty in the California Community Colleges system as expressed at our organization's 2019 Spring Plenary Session through Resolution [6.03 SP19](#) (<https://www.asccc.org/resolutions/provisionally-supportsb-291-leyva-march-1-2019>).

Currently, California community college students are significantly limited in terms of financial aid. Many state and federal student aid programs are structured to help full-time students and therefore do not benefit the 63% of community college students who attend college part time. For example, according to a Legislative Analyst's Office Report, as of 2017, approximately 46 percent of California Community Colleges students receive need-based financial aid, compared to about two-thirds of resident undergraduate students enrolled in the University of California and the California State University systems^a, yet 50% of community college students report food insecurity and 60% report housing insecurity^b.

SB 291 would provide students the opportunity to receive additional financial aid, potentially increasing completion, transfer, and graduation rates across the state and precluding students from increasing their debt from their time at California community colleges.

The Academic Senate's reservation with SB 291 comes from the direction that "Subject to an appropriation by the Legislature, the bill specifies that the program shall be administered by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and implemented by the eligible California community colleges." Instead, the Academic Senate would recommend that this new program be overseen by the Student Aid Commission, as is the case with other financial aid in the system. The Student Aid Commission is charged with overseeing state financial aid programs and is better equipped to fairly and accurately ensure disbursement of funds to students while the Board of Governors focuses on regulatory oversight of the colleges.

^a The 2016-2017 Budget: Higher Education Analysis. California Legislative

Analyst's Office. <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3372>

^b <https://hope4college.com/california-community-colleges-realcollege-survey/>

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For these reasons, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges expresses its willingness and intent to support Senate Bill 291 (Leyva, as of 1 March 2019), if the bill is amended so that financial oversight of financial aid is provided by the Student Aid Commission.

Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions.

Respectfully,



John Stankas, President

Cc: Hon. Connie Leyva, Chair, and the Senate Committee on Education
Olgalilia Ramirez, Consultant, Committee on Education
Mónica Henestroza, Office of Speaker Rendon
Hon. Jose Medina, Assembly Committee on Higher Education Chair
Hon. Steven Choi, Assembly Committee on Higher Education, Vice Chair
Jeanice Warden-Washington, Principal Consultant, Committee on Higher Education
Edgar Cabral, Legislative Analyst's Office
Chris Ferguson, Department of Finance
Lizette Navarette, Community College League of California
Evan Hawkins, FACCC
Laura Metune, Vice Chancellor for Governmental Relations for the California Community Colleges