

NEWS



S E N A T O R
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State Education Leaders Issue Statement on SB 291 and AB 1314

SACRAMENTO – Senate Education Committee Chair Senator Connie M. Leyva (D-Chino), Assembly Higher Education Committee Chair Assemblymember Jose Medina (D-Riverside), Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2 on Education Finance Chair Assemblymember Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento) and California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley today jointly released the following statement regarding SB 291 and AB 1314:

“A college education is necessary for Californians to achieve social mobility and economic stability. As a state, we have prioritized college access and recognized that all students, regardless of income, must have the opportunity to succeed at our public postsecondary institutions. Yet, our existing financial aid programs are insufficient to ensure that our lowest income students and our non-traditional students – largely concentrated in the California Community Colleges – can enroll in and graduate from college.

We introduced Senate Bill 291 and Assembly Bill 1314 to raise awareness of the inequities in our current Cal Grant structure and to begin a conversation about meaningful reform. These bills were designed to work in tandem with the budget, to ensure funding is provided to support the policy changes.

We are pleased to see that the 2019-20 Budget Act includes a significant down payment in the form of nearly 15,000 new Competitive Cal Grants. That is the largest increase ever in this program that serves non-traditional students. The budget also includes increased financial aid for student parents so they can graduate debt-free and funds summer Cal Grants so that students can finish on time.

Even as we celebrate these investments, we also recognize that the funding to implement SB 291 and AB 1314 was not included in this budget. Therefore, together, we have made the decision to turn both SB 291 and AB 1314 into two-year bills, and work over the fall toward a strategy that reflects three principles:

1. Expands Eligibility – The first priority for reforming California’s financial aid structure should be increasing eligibility so that all students with financial need are eligible to receive financial aid at California’s public postsecondary institutions, regardless of their age, time out of high school, or high school academic performance.

2. Increases Non-Tuition Awards – The second priority should focus on linking a student’s financial aid to the total cost of attendance; not just tuition and fees, but also housing and food, transportation, textbooks and supplies.
3. Supports Career Education and Degree Students – The third priority should be to ensure a student has access to financial aid regardless of whether the student seeks to complete a degree, certificate, or high-quality, short-term career program.

We are committed to achieving these priorities while also simplifying and streamlining the Cal Grant program for students and families.

This fall, our offices will work with the California Student Aid Commission, students, colleges, advocates and researchers to strengthen the frameworks established in SB 291 and AB 1314. Our next step will be to identify a reasonable funding phase-in plan, which focuses new resources to address the inequities in our existing structure.

To the strong coalition of students, college leaders and educators, and advocates who supported our effort this year, thank you. Undoubtedly, your advocacy led to the record investment in the Competitive Cal Grant Program. We appreciate every letter, phone call, lobby visit, and rally that you participated in – and we look forward to working together this fall to ensure that the 2020-21 budget makes financial aid a priority for our students.”