



1970 Broadway, Suite 760
Oakland, CA 94612
www.cfpa.net

September 3, 2020

Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor
1020 N Street, Room 2187
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support Senate Bill 1232 – Request Signature

Dear Governor Newsom:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) writes in support of Senate Bill 1232, introduced by Senator Steve Glazer. SB 1232 would allow low-income student parents enrolled in college to receive cash aid and welfare-to-work services through the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program for up to four years and would allow students to receive funds provided through this program as an advance stipend paid at the beginning of the semester or term, rather than as a reimbursement.

CFPA is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. We understand that CalWORKs is a critical source of support for low-income families and we believe that the current coronavirus pandemic exacerbates the needs of those families.

By 2025, California will face a shortfall of 1 million college graduates. At the same time, college students in California are experiencing unprecedented levels of housing and food insecurity, making a college education less accessible, especially for low-income students. A college education is even more difficult to attain for student parents on CalWORKs. College student parents on CalWORKs may be required to work an additional 20-30 hours to receive full CalWORKs benefits. Not only is it difficult to be a parent, full time student, and work 20-30 hours all at the same time, but if a student parent on CalWORKs does not meet their work hour requirement, they may have their benefits reduced. This effectively punishes low-income parents for seeking a college education. With only 48 months of available aid time in California, it is imperative that we ensure our student parents have an opportunity to complete their education before timing out of CalWORKs.



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Furthermore, some CalWORKs student parents are unable to buy their books before classes begin because they do not receive their funds from the county in time. In these scenarios, students either do not buy their books, which puts them behind in their coursework, or they buy their books with their own funds or on credit, further straining them financially.

Existing law establishes the CalWORKs program to provide cash assistance and other services for low-income families through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance through a combination of state, county, and federal TANF funds.

In order to qualify for CalWORKs benefits, recipients must generally be low-income, unemployed, and have dependents. CalWORKs recipients are generally allowed to receive CalWORKs benefits for up to four years, although the majority of recipients do not stay on CalWORKs for that long.

College students on CalWORKs can currently receive full benefits only if the educational activity but only after it has been approved by the county. As such, many low-income parents enter the program after they have begun college or who have sought education outside of the oversight of the County Human Services Agency often are deemed to be non-compliant with the welfare-to-work program and not approved for benefits or support services in the program. This is true even if the course of study would have been deemed to have met the program rules if assigned by a CalWORKs eligibility worker.

Existing law allows students who have been approved by the County Human Services Agency to receive funds to purchase books for their classes, however, counties are not required to give out these funds before the academic term begins. As a result, many parents struggle to make ends meet and forego basic needs or participation in a course of study altogether because they don't have the money to purchase the book. Some parents also report that they often attend classes for weeks without the necessary books because they lack the funds to purchase them.

SB 1232 would allow CalWORKs recipients enrolled in college full time or part-time to receive full CalWORKs benefits if they are making satisfactory progress as defined by the educational



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entity. Part-time students would have to meet the 20-30 CalWORKs hour participation requirements. This bill would also allow these students to receive funds to purchase books prior to the beginning of their academic term. By doing so, it will give more autonomy to low-income parents to exit poverty by advancing their education and employment skills. What's more, SB 1232 will reduce the harm caused by lack of basic needs for parents and children in families where parents are attending college. For these reasons Western Center supports SB 1232 and respectfully requests your signature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jared Call". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jared Call, California Food Policy Advocates

CC: Honorable Senator Glazer, California State Senate (Author)