



May 13, 2020

The Honorable Senator Hurtado, Chairperson
Senate Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 521
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support Senate Bill 1232 – Support

Dear Chairperson Hurtado:

The California Food Policy Advocates supports Senate Bill 1232. This bill would allow low-income student parents enrolled in college to receive CalWORKs benefits for up to four years and receive funds to purchase books prior to the beginning of the academic term.

By 2025, California will face a shortfall of 1 million college graduates.¹ 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.

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:

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.²

College students on CalWORKs can currently receive full benefits only if the educational activity has been approved by the county. Thus, when a CalWORKs parent takes the initiative to improve herself or himself to become self-sufficient, often they are penalized by having their CalWORKs benefits reduced by about \$125 a month for taking initiative.

¹ Public Policy Institute of California

² Dept. of Social Services

Existing law allows students who have been approved by the county to receive funds to purchase books for their classes, however, counties are not required to give out these funds before the academic term begins.

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 educational 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.

For these reasons the California Food Policy Advocates urges an “yes” vote for SB 1232.

Sincerely,



Betzabel Estudillo
Senior Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates

CC: Honorable Senator Glazer, California State Senate (Author)
Sakshi Walia, Office of Senator Glazer