DATE

The Honorable Connie Leyva, Chair

Senate Education Committee

1021 O Street, Suite 6740

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SUPPORT for AB 1746 (Medina and McCarty) Student Financial Aid: Cal Grant Reform**

Dear Chair Leyva,

On behalf of DISTRICT NAME, **I write in support of Assembly Bill 1746 by Assemblymembers Jose Medina and Kevin McCarty.** Assembly Bill 1746 reforms and modernizes the Cal Grant program by expanding access to community college students and making our financial aid system more equitable.

California’s main financial aid system, the Cal Grant program, creates artificial barriers for community college students qualifying for financial aid, which significantly affects their success. While our students make up roughly two-thirds of the students in California, they receive less than ten percent of the total Cal Grant funding. The lack of investment in our students has resulted in a financial aid system that leaves many low-income community college students without the support needed to reach their education goals. Recognizing this inequity, AB 1746 proposes the Cal Grant Equity Framework to address the long-standing barriers to accessing a Cal Grant.

State financial aid is primarily focused on tuition and does not adequately factor in the total cost of attendance. While tuition may be a relatively low barrier for our students, they still struggle to pay rent, purchase food, get to class, and in many cases, support their families. With low levels of financial support, our students are often forced to work more and take fewer classes, ultimately impacting their ability to successfully reach their higher education goals. A 2020 study by The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) found that our low-income students had to work between 25-40 hours a week on minimum wage jobs to meet their living costs once all available financial aid was considered.[[1]](#footnote-1) Research shows that these students are less likely to graduate than those who work less, putting our students at a great disadvantage.

AB 1746 aims to address the total cost of attendance by simplifying the various Cal Grant programs and expanding student eligibility. The extension of the application deadline, elimination of current GPA requirements, and elimination of the age cap would mean that our returning and non-traditional students would have greater access to financial aid. Under the bill’s proposed Cal Grant 2 program, over 109,000 additional community students would receive a Cal Grant— including 73,000 Latino students, 38,000 student parents, and 9,400 Black students. California’s low-income students, including underrepresented students of color, have long struggled under the weight of college affordability challenges, and AB 1746 would ensure that our students do not have to wait any longer.

For these reasons, DISTRICT NAME supports AB 1746 (Medina and McCarty) and urges your “Aye” vote. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at E-MAIL or PHONE NUMBER.

Thank you,

-SIGNATURE-

FIRST NAME LAST NAME

TITLE

DISTRICT NAME

CC: Members, Senate Education Committee

Assemblymember Jose Medina

Assemblymember Kevin McCarty

1. What College Costs for Low-Income Californians: 2020. The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS). July 2020. <https://ticas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/what-college-costs-for-low-income-californians-2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)