



San Mateo County Bill Analysis Form

Date Submitted: April 5, 2022
Submitted Department: County Executive's Office
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Reviewed and Approved by County Attorney
 Yes No

Reviewed and Approved by County Executive
 Yes No N/A

Senate Bill 893

Senator Becker, District 13, Community colleges: San Mateo County Community College District: California College Promise

Version Date: March 16, 2022
 New bill Amended Bill Gut & Amend

Recommended Position
 Sponsor Support
 Support if Amended Oppose
 Other & Describe Supervisors Slocum and Canepa request the Board support this measure.

Summary

Senate Bill (SB) 893 (Becker) would authorize the governing board of the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD) to reduce the enrollment fees established in statute for qualifying students residing within SMCCCD's boundaries. Further, it allows SMCCCD to use California College Promise funds and local funds to assist students with non-tuition costs.

Background/Analysis

Enrollment fees charged at the California Community Colleges (CCC) are set in statute and modified by the Legislature. The CCC enrollment fee has remained flat at \$46 per unit since 2012. Current law requires CCCs to charge the fee but outlines conditions under which those fees are waived for certain students, including those from low-income households.

Enrollment fees at CCCs are the lowest in the nation, and are waived for almost half of students under the Board of Governors (BOG) fee waiver policy. The BOG fee waiver policy waives fees for any CCC student who demonstrates financial need. A full-time or part-time community college student who meets the specified income standards may qualify and may receive the waiver for as long as they are eligible to take courses; there is no minimum unit requirement and the fee waiver is applied to any course for which a student must pay the enrollment fee. Current law additionally requires fees to be waived for surviving dependents of certain military service members and first responders. Some state aid, the Cal Grant Community College Entitlement award, may be used to cover living expenses for eligible CCC students.

In addition to the BOG fee waivers, AB 19 (Santiago, Chapter 735, Statutes of 2017) established the California College Promise Program, which authorizes but does not require CCCs to waive fees for first-time, full-time students *without* financial need for two-years of college. To be eligible for these waivers, students must have no prior postsecondary coursework, enroll in 12 or more units per semester, and submit a FAFSA or a California Dream Act application. Colleges are permitted to use their AB 19 Program funding for a broad range of other purposes, such as providing supplemental services to students. Overall, the AB 19 Program is designed to help increase college readiness, improve student outcomes, and reduce achievement gaps. The AB 19 Program requirements incentivize colleges to adopt certain student support practices and implement systemic change.

The total cost of enrollment – including tuition, fees, books, technology, transportation, food, rent and other living expenses – can exceed \$15,000 per year for community college students. All three of the SMCCCD's colleges — Cañada College, College of San Mateo, and Skyline College — have committed to removing financial barriers that prevent students from achieving their educational goals and increasing college completion through the Promise Scholars Program (PSP). PSP provides students with multi-year tuition support, individualized counseling support, textbook vouchers, and food and transportation incentives through the completion of their degree or certificate. Although the PSP is supported by AB 19 Program funds, AB 19 does not fully fund three years of college and all the wrap-around services that are included in the SMCCCD's PSP.

Challenge

In areas throughout San Mateo County, there is significant need for educational economic support. Demand for SMCCCD's PSP outpaces the allowable funding received through AB 19 and SMCCCD's limited non-general fund dollars.

California law currently prevents local community college districts from using their various local revenues to offset tuition and expenses for students. As a result, SMCCCD can only fund 2,000 of the 6,000 eligible students for its PSP even though they possess enough local revenue to provide financial assistance for all eligible students.

Without the flexibility to use local funds, SMCCCD is unable to supplement the PSP and its goal of supporting underserved communities and creating life-changing impacts for students. Unrestricted funds may be used for any lawful purpose and are not restricted by any external funding source. However, there are certain items that the funds may not be spent on, given that they are public funds and cannot be used as a gift to employees, students, or the public. If SMCCCD wishes to provide fee waivers beyond those provided for in current state law, it must use other funds. The other funds available include grants that specifically allow for these costs such as the AB 19 Program, the District's Foundation, and its Auxiliary Services funds. Notably, the AB 19 Program has its own restrictions, being limited to first-time, full-time students for up to two years.

The SMCCCD has current student needs that cannot be met with existing resources made available through California Promise Program funds.

Recommended Solution

SB 893 would permit SMCCCD to waive or charge reduced enrollment fees to students who reside within SMCCCD's boundaries. It would further allow SMCCCD to use California College Promise funds and local funds to assist students with non-tuition costs.

SB 893 does not increase any state funding for SMCCCD or commit the state to allocate any additional resources to SMCCCD. The bill explicitly places the burden of using the allowable flexibility on SMCCCD and further requires the board of trustees to adopt appropriate and necessary policies relating to qualifications for students who would be eligible for reduced fees.

Requirements and safeguards in the bill include:

- The SMCCCD Board must establish a framework to determine eligibility and students must demonstrate financial need.

- Students must reside in San Mateo County to prevent competition with neighboring districts.
- SMCCCD must publicly provide financial impact information showing that they have the funds to reduce fees for additional students and the District is prohibited from receiving reimbursement from the state.

The Senate Committee on Education amended the bill to add a five-year sunset date of the bill's provisions on June 30, 2028, and require the SMCCCD to report, on March 1, 2026, to CCC Chancellor's office, the Department of Finance and the appropriate committees of the Legislature, on outcomes associated with the authority provided pursuant to the bill.

SB 893 would benefit the students, the County, and the state. By allowing SMCCCD to use local funds to support students' basic needs and to have the flexibility to charge less than the currently required state fee rate of \$46 per credit unit, SMCCCD could make attending college less financially burdensome for students in need of assistance. Further, by permitting SMCCCD to supplement the AB 19 Program with local funds, the bill would increase the number of students eligible to participate in the PSP without any additional cost to the state.

Departments Impacted & Why

SB 893 would not impact any San Mateo County Departments.

Fiscal Impact

SB 893 would have no direct fiscal impact on the County of San Mateo.

Support

San Mateo County Chamber of Commerce
San Mateo County Community College District
San Mateo County Economic Development Association

Opposition

None on record.

Status

1/31/22—Introduced
3/12/22—Passed the Senate Committee on Education
4/4/22—Passed the Senate Committee on Appropriations