An act to add Section 66023.5 to the Education Code, relating to public postsecondary education.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2388, as amended, Berman. Public postsecondary education: basic needs of students.

Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges, under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, as one of the 3 segments of public postsecondary education in this state. Existing law establishes community college districts throughout the state, and authorizes them to provide instruction to students at community college campuses.

Existing law requests campuses of the California Community Colleges to give priority for certain student housing to current and former homeless youth, as specified, and requests those campuses to develop a plan to ensure that current and former homeless youth can access housing resources during and between academic terms, including during academic and campus breaks. Existing law defines homeless youth for these purposes.

This bill would make express legislative finding, about student housing insecurity and student food insecurity, and would express the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to address the basic needs of students.
of community findings and declarations about the impact of basic needs insecurity on college students.

This bill would require each campus of the California Community Colleges to establish the position of Basic Needs Coordinator, commencing on or before July 1, 2021. The bill would specify that a basic needs coordinator would act as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, and mental health services and resources, among other responsibilities. The bill would also require each campus to establish a Basic Needs Center, which would be a central location on campus where basic needs services, resources, and staff are made available to students, as specified. The bill would further require each campus to develop a document to be provided to students at the Basic Needs Center that clearly lists all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources, as specified.

The bill would authorize funding that may be included in the Budget Act of 2021 or a subsequent year for the Student Equity and Achievement Program to fund the campus basic needs coordinators and centers, and authorize the California Community Colleges to seek and accept on behalf of the state any gift, bequest, devise, or donation to aid in the funding of the basic needs coordinators and centers. The bill would require each community college campus, through existing reporting on basic needs, to report specified information to the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges. The bill would also require the chancellor’s office to conduct a student basic needs survey every 2 years, and release the results of the first survey on or before November 15, 2021.

Because the bill would impose new duties on community college districts, it would constitute a state-mandated local program.

(2) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.


State-mandated local program: no-yes.
SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares both all of the following:

(1) California students are struggling to meet their basic needs and are facing housing insecurity, including homelessness, and food insecurity at alarming rates.

(2) A report released in March 2019 by the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges and the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice found that 19 percent of the survey’s respondents experienced homelessness in the previous year, 60 percent of respondents were housing insecure in the previous year, and 50 percent of respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days.

(c) Some groups of students are disproportionately impacted by basic needs insecurity. Students of color, first-generation college students, financial aid recipients, former foster youth, and student parents are at much higher risk.

(d) Basic needs insecurity has a direct impact on student academic success. Students experiencing basic needs insecurity are much more likely to not buy textbooks, to miss, drop, or fail classes, and to withdraw from school entirely. In addition, these students consistently report high levels of stress and other mental health issues, which negatively impact academic performance and health in general.

(e) Addressing Homelessness and Housing Insecurity in Higher Education, a book that provides research-based information and tools for educators and higher education professionals to build effective institutional supports for college students facing housing insecurity, found the following:

“Understanding how basic needs insecurity exists on and around your campus is an important first step. In order to develop a more fully informed understanding of students’ unmet basic needs on your campus, we recommend that you use a mix of survey data collection to learn about the size and scope of the issues as well as using interviews and focus groups to illustrate the experiences from the viewpoints of students. Additionally, you can include institutional data you previously gathered about student
demographics, financial aid use, and the cost of living that may be helpful for expanding the findings of your institution’s evaluation.”

“Students who need support often have a difficult time finding and accessing supports on campus. Campuses can have complex interlocking or disconnected systems that can be difficult to negotiate while managing the stress of homelessness. Students must traverse through complicated financial aid processes and seek appropriate campus support services, while managing courses and other responsibilities.”

“A centralized and coordinated effort can more easily be publicized in a way that all students can benefit. Developing a coordinated strategy increases the likelihood that students, faculty, and staff can more easily access the various forms of support.”

“Research and anecdotal feedback indicate that students who have a single point of contact experienced feelings of campus connection, care, and success in their university communities. Additionally, single point of contact staff can destigmatize students’ use of on-campus supportive services.”

“We recommend creating an integrated approach that includes housing and food insecurity programming working collaboratively. Both services should be in a centrally located space on campus. Students applying to one service should be given information about the other services.”

“Having a web presence with information about services available is important. Students may resist disclosing their circumstances to another person, but they may feel more confident in doing so if they have had the opportunity to explore available resources electronically. Creating a webpage with available resources as well as short stories normalizing students’ circumstances can be a helpful tool in identifying students who need support.”

(f) Community colleges have begun taking steps to meet the basic needs of their students through food pantries, housing-related efforts, and other services and resources, however, students have expressed that the current system is often fragmented with no single point of contact tasked with overseeing existing basic needs services and resources.

(g) Some community colleges are already moving in the direction of a more coordinated and integrated approach. In fact,
53 community colleges have reported that they have some form of basic needs center.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to address the basic needs of community college students.

SEC. 2. Section 66023.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

66023.5. (a) As used in this section:
(1) “Basic needs services and resources” includes, but is not limited to housing, food, and mental health services and resources.
(2) “Coordinator” means a basic needs coordinator established pursuant to this section.

(b) Commencing on or before July 1, 2021, each campus of the California Community Colleges shall do all of the following:
(1) Establish the position of the Basic Needs Coordinator to serve as the single point of contact for students experiencing basic needs insecurity related to housing, food, and mental health. The coordinator shall act as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, and mental health services and resources. To ensure the effectiveness and impact of this position, the coordinator shall be a new position focused on addressing the basic needs of students. The coordinator shall oversee and coordinate with other staff tasked with addressing students’ basic needs, shall inform students of all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources and how to access them, and shall develop partnerships to provide basic needs services and resources to their students.
(2) Establish a Basic Needs Center, which means a central location on campus where basic needs services, resources, and staff are made available to students. The Basic Needs Center is intended to be a one-stop, single location and point of contact for students to more easily access and gain awareness of basic needs services and resources. The campus shall make a reasonable effort to locate all on-campus basic needs services and resources at the Basic Needs Center. If the campus cannot reasonably locate all basic needs services or resources at the Basic Needs Center, the campus shall provide students with the location and contact information, including name, phone number, and email address, for all basic needs services and resources not located in the Basic Needs Center. The coordinator shall be housed in the Basic Needs Center.
(3) Develop a document that shall be provided to students at the Basic Needs Center that clearly lists all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources that includes, but is not limited to the following:

(A) The description of the service or resource.
(B) The location of where the service or resource is provided.
(C) The point of contact for the service or resource, including a name, phone number, and email address.

(4) Develop and utilize a single application for students to receive on-campus basic needs services and resources, if an application is required.

(5) Develop a plan to identify and provide outreach to students, including nontraditional students, who have basic needs insecurity related to housing, food, and mental health. The outreach shall include information about the coordinator and the Basic Needs Center.

(6) Provide a student basic needs tab that is clearly visible and easily accessible from a drop-down menu on the home page of the campus’s internet website and include information about the coordinator, Basic Needs Center, and information described in paragraph (3) conspicuously on both the internet website of the campus and the internet website-based student account associated with a student’s attendance at the institution.

(c) Any funding that may be included in the Budget Act of 2021 or a subsequent Budget Act for the Student Equity and Achievement Program may be used to fund the coordinator and the Basic Needs Center. Notwithstanding Section 11005 of the Government Code and any other law requiring approval by a state officer of gifts, bequests, devises, or donations, the California Community Colleges may seek and accept on behalf of the state any gift, bequest, devise, or donation whenever the gift and the terms and conditions thereof will aid in the funding of the coordinator and creation and operation of the Basic Needs Center.

(d) (1) Each campus of the California Community Colleges shall, through existing reporting on basic needs, additionally report to the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges information which shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(A) The description and number of basic needs services and resources, broken down by category.
(B) The number of students served by the basic needs services and resources.
(C) The socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds of these students.
(D) Challenges and best practices in the implementation of the basic needs services and resources.
(E) Whether students who used the basic needs services and resources remained enrolled or graduated from a campus maintained by the district.

(2) The data and information reported under this subdivision shall be disaggregated by each basic needs service and resource, where applicable.
(3) This section shall not be construed to require the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to submit a new report, as the data and information pursuant to this subdivision shall be incorporated into an existing report on basic needs.
(e) The chancellor’s office shall, every two years, conduct a student basic needs survey that includes housing, food, and mental health, and shall release the results of the first survey on or before November 15, 2021.

SEC. 3. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.