



# What Leaders Are Saying

“In most regions of California, the true cost of attending community college for low-income students is higher than for students at a nearby California State University or University of California campus. Very few community college students qualify for financial aid to cover living expenses, transportation or textbooks. Sen. Leyva’s bill seeks to address these inequities by creating the California Community College Student Financial Aid Program.”

**Eloy Ortiz Oakley**  
Chancellor, California Community Colleges

“In the 47th Assembly District, San Bernardino Valley College is the lifeblood of our education and workforce. With growing costs to our students, and the recognition of the imperative role community colleges play within their communities, it is crucial that we work to ensure that there are as many affordable access points into the California Community College System. The California Community College Student Financial Aid Program will substantially assist those who need it most, ensuring that all Californians have access to an equitable, affordable, quality education in their communities.”

**Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes (D-San Bernardino)**

“As a proud California community college alum, I know first-hand how critical they are to helping people get a higher education, especially those with limited means. If it weren’t for my California community college experience, I wouldn’t be where I am today. Our community colleges are key to keeping California’s workforce skilled and successful.”

**Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland)**

“SB 291, introduced by Senator Leyva, will go a long way to reforming financial aid and is critical to helping our students complete their educational goals.”

**Pam Haynes**  
Vice President, California Community Colleges Board of Governors

“Unfortunately, far too many California community college students cannot afford to pay for textbooks, housing, and transportation despite working two and sometimes three jobs. Senate Bill 291 recognizes that tuition alone isn’t the greatest obstacle for our students, and that the total cost of attendance must be considered when calculating and awarding financial aid to the neediest low-income students. We can’t meet California’s workforce and civic needs without creating a far more equitable system of financial aid. SB 291 is a necessary investment in California’s future.”

**Larry Galizio**  
President & CEO, Community College League of California

“Community colleges are best positioned to train, educate and upskill residents with the knowledge, skills and abilities to compete for jobs and careers in the 21st century knowledge-intensive economy. SB 291 is visionary, pragmatic and ensures that all Californians will have access to high quality and affordable higher education opportunities for generations to come.”

**Francisco Rodriguez**  
**Chancellor, Los Angeles Community College District**

“Students should not have to take on years of expensive loan debt or work an excessive number of hours to put themselves through community college. With this new proposal to expand student financial aid, California has the opportunity to tell our hard-working community college students that we’ve got their backs.”

**Bruce Baron**  
**Chancellor, San Bernardino Community College District**

“Our system is grounded in a belief that access to higher education is a fundamental right, and we have put that belief into practice through open admissions, low or zero cost enrollment fees, and open educational resources (OER). Although these practices have helped millions of Californians reach their educational goals, many Californians are still unable to pursue higher education because they cannot afford housing, food, materials, and transportation while in school. This is especially true for students in rural areas like California’s Central Valley where 11% of the state’s population lives but only 6% have obtained a bachelor’s degree. We will not achieve economic growth if we do not address these achievement gaps. Therefore, I support SB 291 to reform financial aid based on the principles established by the Board of Governors.”

**Kristin Clark**  
**President, West Hills Lemoore College**

“If you really compare, side-by-side, the total cost of attendance for community college students, and consider that most colleges do not have a residency program, most do not have a college meal program, and students living away from campus have considerable transportation expenses, their cost of attendance actually rivals that of our CSU colleagues. That’s why I support SB 291. It will provide more aid to California community college students and give them the help they need to achieve their educational goals.”

**Chad Funk**  
**Associate Vice President of Student Services, American River College**

“This bill will truly help foster California’s talent and grow our economy: a more holistic approach to financial aid means more California community college students will thrive in their educational pursuits. This is a win for California, our students, and our communities.”

**James Todd, Ph.D.**  
**Assistant Superintendent & Vice President of Instruction, San Joaquin Delta College**

“I fully support SB 291. This is one of the most aggressive forms of legislation for some of the hardest working students who have the least amount of resources. This bill levels the playing field for achievement and success, especially for low-income students and students of color, and I hope all Californians see the value in supporting it!”

**Dr. Robert Hill**  
**Dean of Student Services, Glendale College**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ Educational access and affordability are essential to the health of our communities, citizens, and the State’s economic future. The Chief Student Services Officers Association fully supports the expansion of financial aid eligibility and total cost of attendance support outlined in Senator Leyva’s bill.”

**Kathleen Moberg**  
**Chief Student Services Officers Association**

“ SB 291 is the missing catalyst to career advancement for many in our community. Most people are ready and willing to improve their situation, now they will have the financial means to be able to do so. Young people, especially those that are already on their own, will be able to get the financial help they need to go to college, earn a credential or a degree, and begin a career in a well-paying field. SB 291 can be life-altering for many, and I am fully in support of it.”

**Pastor Paul Binion**  
**Westside Church of God, Fresno**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ In order to address future workforce demands and improve economic opportunities for California residents, our state must provide support to all Californians who attempt to pursue a college education but are held back by financial barriers. Investments in financial aid, regardless of a student’s age, immigration status, their time out of school, or educational goal, will help build a stronger workforce, and ultimately, a greater and more stable economy. This is why the L.A. Chamber stands in support of the newly introduced Senate Bill 291, which seeks to re-imagine and expand financial aid opportunities for community college students. The bill is necessary in order to make community college affordable for students with substantial financial need, who are not well served by existing financial aid programs. As a state, we must recognize that the cost of a college education goes well beyond tuition and fees, and includes housing, food, transportation, among other costs. We need to invest in this total cost of attendance because a well-supported student who is prepared for the demands of the 21st century is an investment in job growth and economic prosperity.”

**Maria S. Salinas**  
**President & CEO, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce**

“ We applaud the California Community Colleges and Senator Leyva for seeking to expand financial aid to support the full, true cost of attending community college, which can make a significant impact on the lives of young people experiencing homelessness. Our young people experiencing homelessness need education and employment to successfully exit to self-sufficiency and independence.”

**Jevon Wilkes**  
**Executive Director of the California Coalition for Youth**

“ SB 291 addresses a severe gap in today’s Cal Grant system - community college students are overwhelmingly low-income, yet they currently receive little Cal Grant or institutional aid to address real costs that they face beyond tuition. The proposal targets the largest needs in the state financial aid system, and would be an enormous contribution to the broad overhaul that is needed in the state’s approach to college affordability.”

**Robert Shireman**  
**Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation**

“ The California EDGE Coalition supports this bill to create a new California Community College Financial Aid program designed to cover the total cost of community college attendance, support today’s student who is often returning to college after time in the workforce, and provide access to aid for students pursuing a career technical education certificate or degree.”

**California EDGE Coalition**

“ The Umoja Community Education Foundation supports SB 291 (Leyva, 2019) the California Community College Financial Aid Program. A 2017 report from the US Department of Education found that African American students represent only 11% of first-generation students who graduate with degrees. In addition, the Campaign for College Opportunities’ recent “State of Higher Education for Black Californians” report found that African American students who have attended college are only graduating at a startling 50%. Umoja believes that the expansion of financial aid opportunities will make educational matriculation more attainable for African American students. We urge California legislators to make the right decision for our students.”

**Dr. Teresa W. Aldredge**  
**Board of Directors, President, Umoja Community Education Foundation**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ SB 291 comes just in time to help students who are challenged by the increasing cost of living while attending a community college. Paying for college is more than paying for tuition, and with the cost of textbooks and housing, sometimes the financial burden is just too much to overcome for many in our low-income communities. SB 291 has my full support and I look forward to seeing the rewards it will bring to thousands of people across the state.”

**Gregg Irish**  
**Executive Director, Los Angeles Workforce Development Board**  
**Co-Chair, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ SB 291 gets us closer to addressing the financial needs of Black and African-American students. It’s a financial resource where students will no longer have to choose between working more hours or accumulating excessive debt and attending community college, which we know is a pathway to well-paying jobs of the future. At Greater Sacramento Urban League, we fully support SB 291 and urge Black and African-American leaders statewide to do the same.”

**Cassandra H. B. Jennings**  
**President & CEO, Greater Sacramento Urban League**  
**Co-Chair, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ SB 291 will benefit thousands of Black and African-American students across the state, giving them access to the kind of financial assistance they will need to attend college and better prepare for the jobs that are available in California now and in the near future. We are in full support of SB 291 and commend State legislators for their compassion, leadership and vision.”

**Madame M C Townsend**  
**President & CEO, Regional California Black Chamber of Commerce, San Fernando Valley (C4139382)**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ We commend our state leaders for their boldness to make real change. This bill is critical to eliminating the financial barriers our students face as they work to achieve their education and career goals. We are confident that a reform bill that addresses the total cost of attending college will allow for more students to focus on their educational success. Most aid programs have barriers built within them making them hard to access. This proposal has the potential to touch many people and change many lives. Thank you for your bravery and for putting education first!”

**Tammera Shinar**  
**President, California Community Colleges Student Financial Aid Administrators Association**

“ Investing in financial aid is an investment in California. It is an investment in our economy and our future. I support SB 291 because having an educated workforce is critical to the future of California; financial aid makes it possible.”

**Toni Newman**  
**Disability Services & Programs for Students Coordinator, Sacramento City College**

“ Please vote for more financial aid assistance for California Community College students to increase transfer rates, graduate rates, and help students contribute to the growing economy.”

**Rukiya Bates**  
**Financial Aid Supervisor, Sacramento City College**

“ Please vote for more financial aid and help California community college students graduate, this will provide better support to students who are in need and allow for students to go back out into the community as a working class with a better paying job to support their families and give back to the communities in which they live.”

**Pamela Tuzza**  
**Financial Aid Officer, Sacramento City College**

“ SB 291 is long overdue. This legislation recognizes that community college students face hardships that make it difficult to stay in school without financial help to cover cost of attendance expenses such as housing, transportation and textbooks. I wholeheartedly throw my full support behind this effort to help our students obtain college certificates, credentials and degrees.”

**Joseph R. Williams**  
**President & CEO, Youth Action Project, San Bernardino**  
**Member, Board of Trustees, San Bernardino Community College District**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ The lack of financial aid continues to be the single most stated reason why young people of color fail to achieve their aspirations for higher education and a chance for a better life. Finally, SB 291 stands to remove that barrier and gives these deserving and talented young people a path forward to achieving their heartfelt dreams and desires. Please count me among the supporters of this truly worthy legislation.”

**Dr. Janet Clark**  
**JClark Enterprises**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ Having worked in the California community college system for 12 years, I saw many young people struggling every day to make ends meet and to do whatever it took to complete their education. I can tell you from firsthand experience that SB 291 will change lives for thousands of students across California and make it possible for them to enjoy lifelong financial stability as productive, contributing members of society.”

**Michael Poindexter**  
**Retired, California Community Colleges Administrator**  
**CEO, Engaging You**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ I stand in absolute support of SB 291 which was recently introduced by Senator Connie M. Leyva. SB 291 calls for a financial aid program that covers a community college student’s whole cost of attendance, including living expenses, transportation, and textbooks. Community college students deserve the same access to financial aid as CSU and UC students. Implementation of SB 291 will certainly increase the success rate of community college students, thereby benefiting the entire state of California.”

**Valerie Lynne Shaw**  
**Board of Governors, California Community Colleges**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ Senator Leyva and her fellow legislators are to be lauded for their vision and leadership in authoring SB 291. As a result of their efforts, community college students can look forward to completing their college programs and starting a career in an industry where their skills are needed the most. The Los Angeles Urban League stands resolutely behind this legislation which will help make the lives of our young people more meaningful and productive today and in the years to come.”

**Michael Lawson**  
**President & CEO, Los Angeles Urban League**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ The Umoja Community Education Foundation supports SB 291 (Leyva, 2019) the California Community College Financial Aid Program. A 2017 report from the US Department of Education found that African American students represent only 11 percent of first-generation students who graduate with degrees. In addition, the Campaign for College Opportunities’ recent “State of Higher Education for Black Californians” report found that African American students who have attended college are only graduating at a startling 50 percent rate. Umoja believes that the expansion of financial aid opportunities will make educational matriculation more attainable for African American students. We urge California legislators to make the right decision for our students.”

**Dr. Teresa W. Aldredge**  
**Board of Directors, President, Umoja Community Education Foundation**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ The time has come to address the true cost of college attendance for community college students. We mistakenly think that because community college tuition costs are lower than CSU or UC schools, that somehow the cost of housing, transportation, textbooks, and meals are also lower. Not so. Fortunately, SB 291 addresses this issue by creating a financial aid program that helps community college students cover the true cost of attendance. As a leader in Kern County, I can tell you that this resource is greatly needed, and I strongly embrace and support passage of this legislation.”

**L. Dee Slade**  
**African American Network of Kern County**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ SB 291 allows an obvious opportunity to truly invest in the future of our land at every level. Young people with access to education become the workforce and economic development future of California - to contribute, create, influence, discover... and so much more. I’ve advocated for this type of support, especially for students of color, for a very long time, so now is the time to be all in. Senator Leyva and her fellow legislators can count on my full support.”

**Michael Dolphin**  
**The Dolphin Company**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ All businesses, but especially small black-owned businesses, count on an educated workforce to stay competitive and to be transformative in the lives of the people we serve. That is why the Black business community stands firmly in support of SB 291. Many of us are graduates of the California Community Colleges and we appreciate the value its graduates bring to the workplace each day. The California Black Chamber of Commerce stands firmly in support of this legislation to make financial aid more widely available to eligible Black and African-American students.”

**Edwin A. Lombard**  
**ELM Strategies**  
**Chair Policy, Advocacy and Communications Committee**  
**California Black Chamber of Commerce**  
**Member, California Community Colleges Black and African-American Advisory Panel**

“ Many students can’t afford to fill the (unmet need) gap. Let’s not delay or stop transfer/graduation dreams. Support SB 291!”

**Christian Alvarado**  
**Dean of Enrollment Services, Saddleback College**