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The Honorable Anthony Portantino  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 3086  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: *Senate Bill 291 (Leyva)*  
Position: Support

Dear Chair Portantino:

On behalf of XXX, I write to express support for Senate Bill 291, to create the California Community College Financial Aid Program and provide need-based financial aid to help students cover their total cost of attending college.

By 2025, California will face a projected shortfall of one-million bachelor's degree educated workers and 1.5 million workers with some college education. California Community Colleges are the largest provider of workforce education and transfer preparation in the nation. With 115 colleges located in nearly every community in the state, California Community Colleges represent the best opportunity to meet the needs of students and the future economy.

Despite having the lowest tuition in the nation, the true cost of attending a community college is unaffordable for many low-income students. Nearly half of all students have their fees waived under the California College Promise Grant, but often struggle to cover the non-tuition costs of college, such as food, housing and textbooks, which make up more than 90 percent of their total college costs and can exceed \$19,000 annually.

Under California's current financial aid structure, too little grant aid is available to help community college students cover non-tuition costs. In fact, according to The Institute for College Access and Success, it can be *less affordable* for low-income students to cover the total cost to attend their community college than the University of California in their region.

SB 291 corrects the inequity that exists in the current structure, and ensures a meaningful commitment to college affordability for students with the greatest financial need.

Sincerely,

cc: Members and Consultants of the Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Connie Leyva, 20<sup>th</sup> Senate District