

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 2033 (Reyes) – As Amended April 16, 2024

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: electronic benefits transfer cards: basic needs services and resources

SUMMARY: Requires each campus of the California State University (CSU), and requests each campus of the University of California (UC), to appoint a Basic Needs Coordinator (Coordinator) and establish a Basic Needs Center (Center) by July 1, 2025, to help students access basic needs resources on- and off-campus. Specifically, **this bill:**

1) Defines the following terms:

- a) “Basic needs services and resources” to include, but not be limited to, housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, childcare, and mental health services and resources.
- b) “Coordinator” to mean a basic needs coordinator.

2) Requires each CSU campus and requests each UC campus to do all of the following by July 1, 2025:

- a) Establish a position to serve as the Coordinator to serve as the single point of contact for students experiencing basic needs insecurity related to basic needs services and resources. Requires the Coordinator to:
 - i) Act as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, mental health, and other basic needs services and resources;
 - ii) Ensure the effectiveness and impact of this position;
 - iii) Oversee and coordinate with other staff tasked with addressing students’ basic needs;
 - iv) Inform students of all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources and how to access them; and,
 - v) Develop on- and off-campus partnerships to provide basic needs services and resources to their students.
- b) Establish a Center at a central location on campus where basic needs services, resources, and staff are made available to students. Requires the campus to make a reasonable effort to locate all on-campus basic needs services and resources at the Center. If the campus cannot reasonably locate all basic needs services or resources at the Center, the campus is required to provide students with the location and contact information, including name, telephone number, and email address, for all basic needs services and resources not located in the Center. Requires the Coordinator to be housed in the Center.

- c) Require each Center to:
 - i) Help ensure that students have the information they need to enroll in CalFresh, the California Earned Income Tax Credit, the Young Child Tax Credit, the California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and other relevant government benefits programs;
 - ii) Coordinate with their campus financial aid department or financial aid office. This section shall not be construed to require or encourage the Center to be combined or colocated with the financial aid department or financial aid office;
 - iii) Connect students to the financial aid department or financial aid office as appropriate to ensure that students are receiving all available financial aid; and,
 - iv) Coordinate with their local homelessness response system to refer students to community resources available to address homelessness in addition to services and resources provided by the campus.
 - d) Permit the Center to provide support to students who can be reasonably expected to enroll in the upcoming term and to provide support to students during summer and winter breaks who were previously enrolled or are enrolled for the upcoming fall or spring term.
 - e) Require, to the extent feasible, campuses to endeavor to use a portion of any funds made available for basic needs support for providing funds directly to students to address urgent needs.
 - f) Permit, to the extent that a Center is already in place, that center to be used to satisfy the requirements of this section.
 - g) Require, if the existing Center fulfills only part of the requirements of this section, basic needs services and resources to be expanded as needed to satisfy all the requirements of this section.
- 3) Requires each campus of the CSU and requests each campus of the UC to accomplishing the following by February 1, 2025:
- a) Develop a document to be provided to students at the Center, in either electronic format or paper form, with a list of all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources. The document will be provided during campus orientation, and will be updated every fall and spring semester or quarter. The document will include, but is not limited to, all of the following:
 - i) A description of the service or resource;
 - ii) The location of where the service or resource is provided;
 - iii) The point of contact for the service or resource, including a name, telephone number, and email address;
 - iv) Any eligibility restrictions on accessing the service or resource; and,

- v) The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Food and Nutrition Service's "SNAP Retail Locator" internet website link, which contains a map with locations that are authorized retail food stores under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and accept the use of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards issued.
 - b) Streamline the application and intake process for on-campus basic needs services and resources to minimize duplication and eliminate barriers to access. If an application is required, develop and use a single application for students to receive on-campus basic needs services and resources;
 - c) Develop and implement a plan to identify and provide outreach to students, including nontraditional students, who have basic needs insecurity related to housing, food, and mental health. Requires the outreach to include information about the Coordinator and the Center; and,
 - d) 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' internet website and include the information about the Center and the Coordinator.
- 4) Requires each CSU campus to report to the office of the CSU Chancellor and requests each UC campus to report to the office of the President of the UC, the following data and information disaggregated by each basic needs services and resources, where applicable:
- a) A description and number of basic needs services and resources;
 - b) The number of students served;
 - c) The socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds of students served;
 - 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 university;
 - f) The number of students who first started receiving CalFresh benefits in the previous year and the total number of students in the previous year who received CalFresh benefits; and,
 - g) Whether the campus has a data sharing agreement with the relevant county operating the CalFresh program for the purpose of identifying new, continuing, and returning students who are potentially eligible for CalFresh benefits, or efforts underway to enact such an agreement.
- 5) Requires the Chancellor's office of the CSU and requests the Office of the President of the UC to develop and submit to the Governor and the Legislature every year beginning on or before May 1, 2026, a report based on the data and information reported by campuses listed in 4) above, and information on the use of funds made available for implementation.
- 6) Provides that CSUs and UCs are not precluded from having additional basic needs staff who assist the Coordinator in completing the requirements outlined in 1) through 5) above.

- 7) Requires California Community Colleges (CCCs) on or before September 1, 2025, to update their basic needs services and resource document by the campus-based Center to include the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service's "SNAP Retail Locator" internet website link, which contains a map of the retail food stores in a given area that accept EBT cards or CalFresh.
- 8) Requires, on or before September 1, 2025, each campus of the CCC and the CSU, and requests each campus of the UC to identify and apply for at least one general store or a store that sells food on campus to become an authorized retail food store under the federal SNAP and, if approved, require the store to accept the use of EBT benefits.

EXISTING LAW:

State law:

- 1) Defines "basic needs services and resources" as housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, childcare, and mental health services and resources. (Education Code [EDC] § 66023.5(a))
- 2) Establishes a "basic needs coordinator" as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, mental health, and other basic needs services and resources on each CCC campus. (EDC § 66023.5(b)(1))
- 3) Requires CCCs to establish a Center at each campus 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. (EDC § 66023.5(b)(2))
- 4) Requires campuses of the CCC and the CSU Board of Trustees, and requests the UC Board of Regents to provide all incoming students with educational information regarding CalFresh, including the eligibility requirements, during campus orientation. (EDC § 66027.4)
- 5) Establishes the CalFresh program to administer federal SNAP monetary benefits to qualifying families and individuals, as specified. (Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) § 18900 *et seq.*)
- 6) Instructs the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to issue and maintain instructions for county human services agencies that maximize CalFresh eligibility and minimize the burden for applicants and recipients to verify exemptions to the CalFresh student eligibility rules for students. (WIC § 18901.11(c))
- 7) Establishes the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids (CalWORKs) program to provide cash assistance and other social services for low-income families through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance through a combination of state, county and federal TANF funds. (WIC § 11120 *et seq.*)
- 8) Establishes the CalWORKs Recipients Education Program within the CCCs and specifies the intention of the program is to assist CalWORKs recipients prepare for employment. (EDC § 79200 *et seq.*)

Federal law:

- 9) Establishes SNAP to promote the general welfare and to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the nation's population by raising the levels of nutrition among low-income households. (7 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 2011 *et seq.*)
- 10) Restricts students who are enrolled at least half-time in institutions of higher education from qualifying for SNAP benefits, unless the individual qualifies for an exception, as specified. (7 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] § 273.5 *et seq.*)
- 11) Establishes under federal law the TANF program to provide aid and welfare-to-work services to eligible families. (42 U.S.C. § 601 *et seq.*)
- 12) Establishes WIC, which provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income, pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to five years of age who are found to be at nutritional risk. (7 C.F.R. § 246)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, this bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Background: *Public Social Services.* In October 2023, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) released a report in which it found that 31.1% of California residents were poor or near poor and 3.3% of families were living in deep poverty, meaning they had less than half the resources to meet basic needs. To address the basic needs of families, children, and individuals living in poverty, California administers several key safety-net programs, including, among others:

- CalWORKs provides cash benefits to eligible children and families that meet certain income and work requirements;
- CalFresh provides food benefits to households that meet federal eligibility requirements for income and household size;
- California Food Assistance Program provides monthly food benefits to noncitizens who are ineligible for CalFresh solely due to their immigration status; and,
- WIC provides food benefits to low-income, pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, as well as children up to five years of age who are at nutritional risk.

While the PPIC report demonstrates that poverty increased overall between 2021 and early 2023, the report also reveals that without vital social safety-net programs, more Californians would live in poverty. Specifically:

In early 2023, about 3.2 million more Californians (8.4%), would have been in poverty without safety net programs. CalFresh kept 1.1 million Californians out of poverty (3%), up from one million families in fall 2021, due mainly to increased enrollment. The federal Earned Income Tax Credit lowered poverty by 1.1 points; after the end of its temporary expansion, the federal [children's tax credit] lowered poverty by only 0.8 points (compared to 1.8 points in Fall 2021).

The report also found that, while poverty rates vary widely across the state, safety-net programs most reduce poverty in inland areas, such as the Central Valley and Sierra regions.

College Students' Basic Needs. While many of the existing social safety-net programs exist to provide support to children and families, college students in California also face food, housing, and financial insecurity. In February 2019, the California Higher Education Basic Need Alliance released a brief describing a holistic approach to address students' basic needs. Among other things, the brief found:

- 50% of CCC students experience food insecurity, compared to 41.6% of CSU students, 44% of UC undergraduates, and 26% of UC graduate students;
- 19% of CCC students have experienced homelessness within the preceding 12 months, 60% of CCC students experience housing insecurity, 10.9% of CSU students are homeless, and 5% of UC students are homeless; and,
- Low-income students spend about half their family income on out-of-pocket costs after grant aid, and each year, over 300,000 eligible applicants do not receive a state Cal Grant because not enough are available.

The 2024 data from the *Basic Needs Annual Report* published by the UC demonstrates that students who experience food and housing challenges have lower grade point averages compared to students who have their basic needs met. The number of students living in poverty has progressively worsened over the last few years which might be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The California Student Aid Commission (Commission) reports that the COVID-19 pandemic made it more difficult for students to find housing and meet food needs. Using the Student Expenses and Resources Survey, the Commission reports that there is a 13% increase in students reporting food insecurity and a 17% increase in housing insecurity.

Students in Poverty Accessing Services. While college students may meet the necessary eligibility criteria to access social safety-net programs, some programs explicitly exclude college students from participation. For example, CalFresh prohibits college students from accessing the program unless they qualify for an exemption under what is known as the “CalFresh student eligibility rule.” To qualify for an exemption, a student must meet one of the following requirements:

- Employed 20 hours a week;
- Participating in federal or state work study;
- Full-time student with a child under 12 years of age;
- Part-time student with a child under six years of age;
- Part-time student with a child between six and 12 years of age for whom adequate care is not available;
- Receiving CalWORKs;
- Enrolled in the CalFresh Employment and Training Program, or other state or local job training programs that the USDA will accept; or,

- Do not intend to register for the next normal school term.

In February 2022, a CalFresh workgroup convened to understand how students access the benefits system and process, as well as identify recommendations to help promote student participation in the CalFresh program by the Commission published a report of their findings. The workgroup found a lack of awareness and navigation support, the administrative burden of the application process itself, and having to repeatedly provide documentation or attend appointments at inconvenient times were all barriers to most students who are also balancing school and jobs. The workgroup also reported that, “Among California’s postsecondary students, it is estimated that between 400,000 and 750,000 are eligible for CalFresh. Yet only 127,000 students receive food benefits through CalFresh.”

Basic Needs Centers on CCC Campuses. In 2020, Assemblymember Berman introduced the first iteration of a bill which would require the CCCs to have Centers and Coordinators on campus to assist students with housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, childcare, and mental health services, and other resources. AB 2388 of 2020 was held under submission in the Senate Education Committee. Three years later, AB 775 (Berman), Chapter 942, Statutes of 2022, established campuses of the CCCs to have Centers and Coordinators by July 1, 2022, and was codified with \$160 million to help CCC fulfill the requirements in SB 132 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 144, Statutes of 2021.

In May 2023, the Chancellor’s Office of the CCC published the first Basic Needs Services Center Report, which contained an update on the CCC compliance with SB 132. Each of the 115 brick and mortar CCC have a Center which provides services to students and 60 college campuses provided data on services to the Chancellor’s Office. Of the 60 colleges who reported data, the number of students served by category of resource is as follows:

- 31,361 received food security services;
- 4,156 received housing security services;
- 15,179 received support for transportation insecurities;
- 1,615 received mental health services;
- 4,466 received physical health services;
- 9,091 received technology support services; and,
- 524 received child support assistance.

In the 2023-24 budget year, CCC Centers received a cost of living adjustment of 8.22% in addition to the \$30 million in annual funding.

Basic Needs Centers on CSU & UC Campuses. While there is no current statute for CSU & UC campuses to have equivalent Centers, the Legislature allocated either one-time or ongoing funding for basic needs support for students attending CSU and UC campuses for the last six budget years. Currently, the State provides \$15.8 million in ongoing funding for UC basic needs services and \$26.3 million in ongoing funding for CSU basic needs services.

In August 2022, EdSource reported that all 23 campuses of the CSU and all 10 campuses of the UC have Centers. The annual Budget Act of 2022, required the CSU to provide an annual system-wide report on the provision of student mental health services and basic needs support. The most recent CSU report was submitted to the Legislature on March 11, 2024, and includes a campus-by-campus description of services rendered on the campus along with system-wide figures of services provided. In the system-wide section, the following data points are relevant for the purposes of this analysis:

- All 23 CSU campuses have on- and off-campus resources and partnerships to address food insecurities, housing insecurities, and mental health services; and,
- Currently, 10 CSU campuses currently accept CalFresh/EBT at various venues on campus, including, but not limited to, campus dining halls, on-campus fast food restaurants, campus-based markets, convenience stores, and farmers' market events. The 10 campuses currently offering this option to students include: CSU Chico, CSU Long Beach, CSU Los Angeles, CSU Monterey Bay, CSU Northridge, Cal Poly Pomona, CSU Sacramento, CSU San Diego, CSU San Francisco, and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Furthermore, according to the CSU Basic Needs Initiative Brochure, all 23 campuses have administrators or staff who manage the basic needs programs on campus and connect students with resources.

The Annual Budget Act of 2022, also required the UC to provide an annual system wide report on basic needs, mental health, and rapid rehousing services on UC campuses. The most recent report was submitted in February 2024 and contained data collected from UC campuses from July 2022 – June 2023. Within the aforementioned timeframe, the UC served over 78,000 students across all campus-based food and housing support services. To accommodate the demand of services, the UC employs 54 staff and 389 student staff members to provide basic needs and rapid rehousing services across all 10 campuses of the UC. The report reaffirmed each campus has a Center and staff to help assist students, and the only UC campus which does not accept EBT on campus nor plans to accept EBT on campus is UC San Francisco.

County Liaisons for Higher Education. In 2022, AB 1326 (Arambula), Chapter 570, Statutes of 2021, required all county offices to designate at least one staff member to serve as a liaison to institutions of higher education within their jurisdiction. Due to county delays, 2023 was the first year in which every UC campus was assigned a liaison. With county liaisons available, campuses have consistent and direct contact with whom to receive technical and application assistance for CalFresh, as well as request on-campus support.

AB 2150 (Arambula) of the current legislative session, aims to build off AB 1326 by establishing a statewide network of Coordinators and county liaisons of higher education to share best practices and ensure coordination across the state, that all students receive support, regardless of where they attend university, and to share best practices.

Given that there are no statutory requirements for CSUs and UCs, but there are for CCCs, this bill requires each campus of the CSU and requests each campus of the UC to designate a Basic Needs Coordinator and establish a Basic Needs Center to facilitate access to essential services and resources.

Author’s Statement: According to the Author, “CalFresh benefits are critical in helping address student hunger, and it is important that we make it possible for students to use these benefits on campus. [This bill] ensures that college students can use their food benefits by requiring at least one store on each college campus to become an authorized electronic benefit transfer (EBT) vendor. If approved, these stores would be required to accept EBT. It would also require college campuses to provide students with information on EBT vendors on and off campus. [This bill] supports low-income students across California by increasing the number of locations that accept EBT on campus. This bill will also ensure that students have easily accessible information on EBT vendors on and off campus so that they know where they can use their food benefits.”

Equity Implications: Basic needs insecurity disproportionately affects marginalized and underserved student populations, including low-income students, first-generation college students, students of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, and other non-cisgender identities and sexualities students, and students with disabilities. Structural inequities, such as systemic racism, poverty, and housing discrimination exacerbate disparities in access to resources and opportunities among these student groups.

In 2018, the CSU surveyed its student population and found that 41.5% of CSU students identified as food insecure, and 10.9% identified as having experienced homelessness one or more times in the previous year. CSU students who identify as Black and the first in their families to attend college, experience food insecurity at a higher rate than their peers, as the survey found more than 65% identified as food insecure and 18% identified as homeless.

In 2024, the UC surveyed its student population and found that 43% of UC students identified as food insecure in 2022, and 8% identified as housing insecure. Black students reported higher rates of food and housing insecurity compared to their peers.

Connecting students to services is crucial to ensuring they can continue to finish programs that lead to stable jobs. Programs that are tailored to making linkages to public assistance programs will likely positively impact these students.

Double referral: This bill was previously heard in the Assembly Higher Education Committee, on April 2, 2024, and was approved on a 10-0 vote.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 2150 (Arambula) of the current legislative session, see comments above. AB 2150 is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 870 (Arambula) of 2023, would have required CDSS to convene a workgroup to share best practices, updates, challenges, or other topics related to programs and services offered by CDSS that may be available to students attending a public higher education institution. AB 870 was held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee suspense file.

AB 1514 (Reyes) of 2023, would have required CDSS to convene a workgroup of various stakeholders to develop recommendations to allow data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be released to county welfare departments in order to authorize students to apply to receive public social services based on data collected from their FAFSA application. AB 1514 was held on the Assembly Appropriations suspense file.

SB 641 (Skinner), Chapter 874, Statutes of 2022, required CDSS to convene a workgroup to identify the necessary changes to improve access to CalFresh for college students.

AB 775 (Berman) Chapter 942, Statutes of 2021, see comments above.

AB 85 (Committee on Budget) Chapter 4, Statutes of 2021, appropriated \$28.8 8 million for county administrators and outreach costs associated with Calfresh benefits to students enrolled in higher education institutions.

AB 1278 (Gabriel), Chapter 517, Statutes of 2019, required each CCC and CSU campus and requests each UC campus to provide on a website-based account for an enrolled student notification of, and a link to, the internet websites of CalFresh, local mental health, and housing resources.

SB 77 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Statutes of 2019, Chapter 53, required CDSS's CalFresh and Nutrition Branch to convene the CalFresh Student Data Workgroup to compile statewide data on college student participation in CalFresh and to provide recommendations for improving CalFresh access among college students.

SB 85 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 23, Statutes of 2017, required the Trustees of the CSU, authorizes the governing board of participating a CCC district, and encourages the Regents of the UC to designate, a "hunger free campus" if they meet specified criteria, as defined, for the purpose of procuring additional legislative funds.

AB 214 (Weber), Chapter 134, Statutes of 2017, required the California Student Aid Commission to notify Cal Grant recipients who qualify for participation in the CalFresh program. Provided clarity to existing policies in order to simplify CalFresh administration for college students and required CDSS to maintain a list of programs that provide a student potential eligibility for a CalFresh exemption if specific requirements are met.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (Co-Sponsor)
 Student Senate for California Community Colleges (Co-Sponsor)
 California Association of Food Banks
 California Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO
 California Student Aid Commission
 California Teachers Association
 Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
 Faculty Association of California's Community Colleges
 Generation Up
 NextGen California
 San Diego Hunger Coalition
 Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
 uAspire

Opposition

None on file.

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