



May 28, 2020

The Honorable Loretta Gonzalez
California State Assembly
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0080

RE: SUPPORT AB 2416 (GABRIEL) — FINANCIAL AID ACCESS FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Dear Assemblymember Gonzalez,

AdvancED Consulting, LLC is pleased to support Assembly Bill 2416, which will make it easier for college students who have experienced homelessness to remain enrolled, by requiring that colleges consider homelessness as an extenuating circumstance when evaluating appeals for the loss of financial aid. There will be no cost to implement this bill and it is expected to leverage millions of dollars in federal financial aid for students with the greatest level of need.

As the owner of management and Salesforce consultancy AdvancED Consulting, LLC, I have supported nonprofit and education organizations and community leaders across California since 2011. I am also the Founding Operations Director of the California College Guidance Initiative, a virtual statewide organization that uses www.CaliforniaColleges.edu to support 15% of California's 6th-12th grade students in developing informed, thoughtful postsecondary plans in collaboration with schools, districts, postsecondary institutions, and community organizations. I spent Fall of 2018 researching and writing content specific to supporting underserved populations like California's homeless youth in accessing the support they need to not just survive in this state, but to thrive. Today, I serve multiple nonprofits in supporting students through effective college access and financial aid coaching programs, tools, and services. As a Commissioner for the Commission on the Status of Women serving Santa Clara County, I am especially attentive to the high rates of homelessness in this county. I'm proud that Santa Clara County has a Community Plan to end Homelessness and I look forward to seeing it implemented (<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/yes/takeaction/Documents/Draft%20Community%20Plan%20to%20End%20Homelessness%20Strategies%201.23.20.pdf>).

Access to higher education, whether a vocational certificate, associate degree, bachelor's degree or beyond, is critical to help low-income youth move out of poverty. For low-income students whose academic prospects are already precarious, ongoing access to financial aid is essential to their ability to remain enrolled, and yet, every year, thousands of these students in California lose access to financial aid

because they fall below certain academic standards known as Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).

Most colleges offer the opportunity to appeal the loss of financial aid due to SAP, but appeals processes vary tremendously by campus. Colleges are given significant latitude under federal regulations to define the criteria for a successful appeal, but many do not take advantage of this flexibility. When a student experiences homelessness, the instability of this experience frequently causes grades to drop, however homelessness is not universally defined by colleges as a special circumstance that warrants a student being given the opportunity to maintain financial aid in order to remain enrolled and regain academic standing.

Nineteen percent of students at community colleges and eleven percent of California State University students experience homelessness, and African American students, Native American students, gay/lesbian students, and foster youth are disproportionately impacted by the homelessness crisis. Currently, for many students who experience homelessness, the loss of financial aid means the end of their academic career. Continued access to financial aid is a vital tool to allow these students to remain enrolled and get back on track academically. AB 2416 will offer students who have experienced homelessness this opportunity.

AdvancED Consulting, LLC appreciates your leadership in authoring this valuable bill and strongly supports its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Curry', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Meredith Curry
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