

AB 775 (Berman)

Basic Needs Center and Coordinator

SUMMARY

AB 775 would provide a coordinated and integrated approach to address students' basic needs by establishing a Basic Needs Center and Basic Needs Coordinator on each campus. A center and coordinator would provide a single point of contact for community college students to more easily access, gain awareness, and be connected to basic needs services and resources.

BACKGROUND

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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, recommended "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."

Some community colleges are already moving in the direction of a more coordinated and integrated approach. In fact, the Chancellor's Office reports that about 55 community colleges have basic needs centers.

However, as campuses physically closed and moved to online classes during the COVID-19 crisis, the existing basic needs challenges that students face become even more pronounced and urgently require action.

THIS BILL

AB 775 builds upon the existing actions of community colleges as well as follows research-based, practical guidance to address students' basic needs.

Specifically, AB 775 would, no later than July 1, 2022, establish a Basic Needs Center and Basic Needs Coordinator on each campus, which would provide a single point of contact for community college students to more easily access, gain awareness, and be connected to basic needs services and resources. The Basic Needs Coordinator would serve as the single point of contact for students experiencing basic needs insecurity and would 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. 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 existing basic needs services and resources.

Additionally, no later than February 1, 2022, community college campuses are required to:

(1) Develop a document that is to be made available to students online that clearly lists all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources that includes, but is not limited to the following:

- The description of the service or resource.

- The location of where the service or resource is provided.
- The point of contact for the service or resource including a name, phone number, and email address.
- Any eligibility restrictions on accessing the service or resource.

(2) Streamline the application and intake process to minimize duplication and eliminate barriers to access.

(3) 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.

(4) 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 website and include information for students about basic needs services and resources on the student basic needs tab of the website and student portal, which is especially critical during these unprecedented times.

SUPPORT

Student Senate for California Community Colleges
(co-sponsor)
John Burton Advocates for Youth (co-sponsor)
Young Invincibles (co-sponsor)

OPPOSITION

None on File

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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