



March 6, 2017

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
 Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget, Subcommittee 2 on Education Finance
 State Capitol, Room 2136
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Strengthening college affordability through the 2017-18 California state budget

Dear Chair McCarty:

Californians for College Affordability is a diverse coalition of higher education advocacy, civil rights, student leadership, workforce and business organizations that works to strengthen California’s need-based financial aid programs so that all students – regardless of income – can afford to attend and complete college.

Hundreds of thousands of students have benefitted from the Cal Grant increases championed and won by the Assembly in 2014 and 2015. Given the Assembly’s historic leadership on this issue, we are writing to urge you, as the chair of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance, to support and advocate for the following two specific augmentations to need-based financial aid in the 2017-18 Budget Act:

- **Increase the number of annually authorized Competitive Cal Grants.** Eligible Cal Grant applicants who apply more than a year after graduating from high school must compete for a small number of awards. Hundreds of thousands of otherwise eligible applicants currently go unserved, and most have family incomes below the federal poverty line.
- **Increase the maximum Cal Grant B access award.** Cal Grant B awards, which support the lowest of the low-income students, include an “access” award to help cover non-tuition costs, such as

books and supplies, room and board, and transportation. However, the purchasing power has declined sharply over time. The current access award of \$1,670 holds one-quarter of its original value.

There is tremendous unmet need in both of these areas, but even modest increases will help to chip away at the problem, benefiting students across all types of colleges (public and private schools alike) and – ideally – serve as a down payment for future, deeper investments. For example:

With this amount of additional resources in 2017-18...	... this many more new competitive Cal Grants could be paid next year.	... the maximum Cal Grant B access award could increase by this amount.
\$10 million	3,700	\$50
\$25 million	9,300	\$120
\$50 million	18,700	\$240
\$100 million	37,400	\$480

As you are aware, California needs an additional 2.4 million college graduates by 2030 to remain competitive, but that won't happen if our needy students cannot afford to attend and succeed in college. Increasing the number of grants available, and increasing the size of the Cal Grant B access award will have a tangible impact on helping low-income students across all types of schools get to and through college.

Thank you for your consideration and your leadership.

Sincerely,

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles
 Bay Area Council
 California Asian Pacific Islander Budget Partnership
 California Community College Association of Student Trustees
 California Competes
 California EDGE Coalition
 California Homeless Youth Project
 CALPIRG
 California State Student Association
 The Campaign for College Opportunity
 EARN
 The Education Trust – West
 The Institute for College Access & Success
 John Burton Advocates for Youth
 Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
 MALDEF
 NAACP Los Angeles
 National Council of La Raza
 Public Advocates Inc.
 Southern California College Access Network

Student Senate for California Community Colleges
uAspire
University of California Student Association
Young Invincibles

CC: Members, Assembly Committee on Budget, Subcommittee 2 on Education Finance
Assemblymember Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget
Assemblymember Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the Assembly
Mark Martin, Consultant, Assembly Committee on Budget, Subcommittee 2 on Education Finance
Mónica Henestroza, Special Assistant, Speaker of the Assembly