



March 6, 2017

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino  
 Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee, Subcommittee 1 on Education  
 State Capitol, Room 3086  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear Chair Portantino:

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.

Given the Senate’s strong commitment to low-income students, we are writing to urge you, as the chair of the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education, 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:

<b>With this amount of additional resources in 2017-18...</b>	<b>... this many more new competitive Cal Grants could be paid next year.</b>	<b>... the maximum Cal Grant B access award could increase by this amount.</b>
\$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, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee, Subcommittee 1 on Education  
Senator Holly J. Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee  
Senator Kevin de León, Senate President pro Tempore  
Anita Lee, Consultant, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee, Subcommittee 1 on Education  
Kimberly Rodriguez, Consultant, Senate President pro Tempore