



The Education Trust-West



July 2, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento CA 95814

The Honorable Toni G. Atkins  
President pro Tempore,  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon  
Speaker of the Assembly,  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 219  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Budget and Fiscal Review Committee,  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5019  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Committee on Budget,  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable John Laird  
Chair, Budget and Fiscal Review Committee,  
Subcommittee 1 on Education,  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 4040  
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

**Re: Historic Investments in Cal Grants in 2021-22 California Budget Agreement**

Dear Governor Newsom, Pro Tem Atkins, Speaker Rendon, Chair Skinner, Chair Ting, Chair Laird, and Chair McCarty:

As a diverse coalition of higher education advocacy, civil rights and social justice, business and workforce, and student leadership organizations united in strengthening state need-based financial aid so that all Californians can afford to successfully earn a higher education credential, **we write to express our appreciation for the historic investments in college affordability, and in entitlement Cal Grants for community college students in particular, in the 2021-22 California budget agreement.** Our organizations are deeply committed to ensuring equitable, affordable college opportunity, and we are grateful for your leadership in the pursuit of strengthening college affordability so that low-income students' higher education success is not curtailed by [unaffordable costs](#) and burdensome debt, both of which the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to exacerbate.

While the creation of the Cal Grant entitlement was a crowning achievement in its time, the intervening decades have also laid bare its structural limitations, including the exclusion of hundreds of thousands of eligible applicants – the vast majority of whom attend [community colleges](#) – because of their age or the amount of time that has elapsed since their high school graduation. We have [long supported](#) meaningful structural changes to and investments in state need-based financial aid to support vulnerable students, in particular those who are lower income and students of color, which the [impacts of the ongoing pandemic](#) have only made more urgent.

We are incredibly grateful that the final 2021-22 state budget provides access to entitlement awards for all eligible students at community colleges, which they can retain when they transfer to a California State University or University of California. This critical policy change and corresponding monumental investment will initially nearly double – and by 2025-26 *triple* – the amount of Cal Grant dollars received by lower income CCC students, who today receive just seven percent of entire

program funding, and will go far in supporting the least resourced Californians who must put about half of their income towards covering higher education costs [after available grant aid](#). With CCCs serving the [majority of the state's students of color](#) - and the majority of the state's Black, Latinx, and Native American students coming from families who make less than \$30,000 annually<sup>1</sup>- this reform will play a key role in closing the state's equity gaps in higher education access and success.

**We applaud your leadership and sustained commitment to higher education equity, affordability, access, and success, and greatly appreciate your prioritization of this key funding to implement a major policy milestone in the final 2021-22 state budget.** Thank you for all you have already done and will continue to do to support underserved Californians' success in the college classroom and beyond as they achieve the upward mobility that will allow them and the state to thrive.

Sincerely,

Alliance for a Better Community  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles  
Bay Area Council  
California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy  
California EDGE Coalition  
California STEM Network  
CALPIRG Students  
The Campaign for College Opportunity  
Children Now  
East Bay Leadership Council  
The Education Trust – West  
GO Public Schools  
The Institute for College Access & Success  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Mission Graduates  
NextGen California  
Northern California College Promise Coalition  
Partnership for Los Angeles Schools  
Promesa Boyle Heights  
Public Advocates  
Robert Shireman, The Century Foundation  
San Bernardino Community College District  
SaverLife  
Silicon Valley Leadership Group  
Social Justice Learning Institute  
Southern California College Access Network

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<sup>1</sup> TICAS calculations on data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2015-16.

uAspire  
UnidosUS  
UNITE-LA  
Young Invincibles

CC: Senator Connie M. Leyva  
Assemblymember Jose Medina  
Members, California State Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Members, California State Assembly Committee on Budget  
Megan Baier, Office of Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins  
Mónica Henestroza, Office of Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon  
Anita Lee, Consultant, California State Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Mark Martin, Principal Consultant, California State Assembly Committee on Budget  
Jennifer Pacella, Deputy Legislative Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office  
Lande Ajose, Senior Policy Advisor for Higher Education,  
Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
Chris Ferguson, Program Budget Manager, California Department of Finance  
Marlene Garcia, Executive Director, California Student Aid Commission