



December 13, 2021

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

**RE: Request for Cal Grant Investments in 2022-23 California State Budget Proposal**

Dear Governor Newsom,

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, **we write today to thank you for your leadership in increasing investments in equitable, affordable college opportunity, and to urge you to build on last year’s historic investments in Cal Grants, student housing and postsecondary data by strengthening the Cal Grant program further in your proposed 2022-23 state budget. Specifically, we encourage you to consider additional measures to streamline and simplify the program, remove barriers to Cal Grant access based on GPA at community colleges, and further address the continuing rise in non-tuition college costs.**

The brand-new Cal Grant entitlement award for all eligible students at California Community Colleges (CCCs), which they can retain when they transfer to a California State University or University of California campus, was a critical policy change that will nearly double – and by 2025-26 triple – the amount of Cal Grant dollars received by lower-income CCC students, who previously received just seven percent of entire program funding. This change 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 considering that 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.

Combined with other 2021-22 state budget investments to help current and former foster youth students, students facing basic needs challenges, middle-income families, and more, the state made significant progress toward the longtime goal of providing aid sufficient to cover students’ total college costs.

---

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

As you look to invest further in Californians recovering from the ongoing pandemic, we urge you to continue to prioritize investments in students, whose financial aid applications (FAFSA) and enrollment continue to lag due to COVID-19 related disruption. Together, we ask you to include the following provisions in your 2022-23 budget proposal to make college affordability a reality for even more Californians:

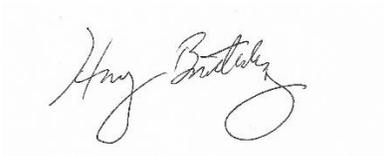
1. **Streamline and Simplify the Process:** Consolidate the multiple Cal Grant awards and better integrate eligibility calculations with federal Pell Grant eligibility. As the federal government implements changes to simplify the application process for federal financial aid, California has the opportunity to align state aid policy with those goals. Further simplification and streamlining will enable earlier and clearer communication to families and create a simpler process that will lower barriers to applying for and accessing aid.
2. **Remove Cal Grant restrictions based on GPA for CCC students:** Remove the Cal Grant GPA requirement for the lowest income CCC students (those eligible for the maximum federal Pell Grant), a key remaining barrier to college access that fuels long-standing structural inequities within the program. Too many of the students who could otherwise benefit from the new Cal Grant entitlement award for CCC students will not receive it because of the continued GPA requirement. For older students, their high school performance is often less relevant to their ability to succeed in college and, for those who have met the GPA requirement, they are often unable to obtain high school records.
3. **Address non-tuition college costs:** Index the Cal Grant access award to annual inflation to maintain its purchasing power over time. While expanding Cal Grant access to more Californians should remain a priority for the state, it is also important to ensure that the purchasing power of this vital state financial aid program does not erode over the years. The current maximum access award is \$1,648 and covers just nine percent of students' non-tuition college costs today, which can exceed \$20,000 annually for many students across all types of colleges in California. Over the past two decades, the value of the maximum access award has grown at a much slower rate than college costs and had it kept pace with the growth of non-tuition costs, it would worth about \$3,200 – nearly double its current amount.<sup>2</sup>

As a diverse range of organizations that have been working for years to meaningfully strengthen and equitably reform state need-based financial aid, we are excited about California's recent and potential investments to eliminate program barriers that have perpetuated rather than closed disparities in college enrollment and completion by race and by income. We applaud your leadership and sustained commitment to higher education equity, affordability, access, and success; thank you for all you have already done and will continue to do to support underserved Californians' success in college and beyond.

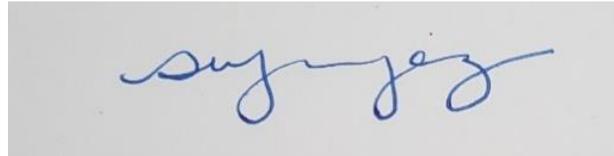
---

<sup>2</sup> TICAS. January 19, 2021. "Memo: Ensuring Cal Grant Reforms Support Meaningful Coverage of Students' Non-Tuition College Costs." <https://bit.ly/3rEnr6A>.

Sincerely,



Henry Bartholomay  
Senior Policy Manager  
**Bay Area Council**



Su Jin Gatlin Jez  
Executive Director  
**California Competes**



Zima Creason  
Executive Director  
**California EDGE Coalition**



Ridley Coen Gilbert  
Statewide Board of Directors Chair  
**CALPIRG Students**



Vince Stewart  
Vice President, Policy & Programs  
**Children Now**



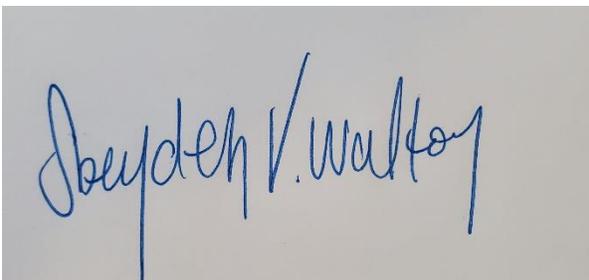
Brian Rivas  
Senior Director of Policy  
**The Education Trust-West**



Debbie Raucher  
Education Director  
**John Burton Advocates for Youth**



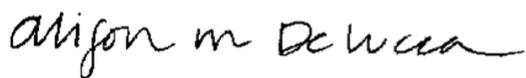
Meredith Curry  
Executive Director  
**Northern California College Promise Coalition**



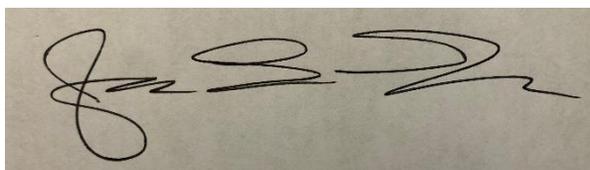
Sbeydeh Viveros-Walton  
Director of Higher Education  
**Public Advocates**



David Palter  
Senior Director, Higher Education and Workforce  
Development  
**Silicon Valley Leadership Group**



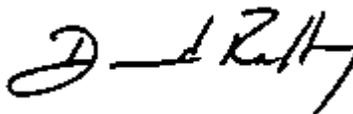
Alison De Lucca  
Executive Director  
**Southern California College Access Network**



Jessica Thompson  
Associate Vice President  
**The Institute for College Access & Success**



Anika Van Eaton  
Senior Policy Director  
**uAspire**



David Rattray  
President & CEO  
**UNITE-LA**



Kevin Zwick  
Chief Executive Officer  
**United Way Bay Area**



Mahmoud Zahriya  
Western Region Director  
**Young Invincibles**

CC: Joey Freeman, Chief Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
Ben Chida, Chief Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
Senator Toni G. Atkins, President pro Tempore, California State Senate  
Assemblymember Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the Assembly, California State Assembly  
Senator Nancy Skinner, Chair, California State Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Assemblymember Phil Y. Ting, Chair, California State Assembly Committee on Budget  
Senator John Laird, Chair, California State Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee,  
Subcommittee 1 on Education  
Assemblymember Kevin McCarty, Chair, California State Assembly Committee on Budget,  
Subcommittee 2 on Education Finance  
Senator Connie M. Leyva, Chair, California State Senate Education Committee  
Assemblymember Jose Medina, Chair, California State Assembly Committee on Higher  
Education