June 6, 2024

The Honorable Mike McGuire  The Honorable Robert Rivas
Senate President pro Tempore  Speaker of the Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8518  1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, California 95814  Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Scott Wiener  The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget  Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget
and Fiscal Review  1020 N Street, Room 502
1021 O Street, 8230  Sacramento, California 95814
Sacramento, California 95814

RE:  2024-25 Budget: Cal Grant Reform Support Legislative Proposal for Phase-In

Dear President Pro Tempore McGuire, Speaker Rivas, Chair Wiener and Chair Gabriel:

As a trusted source of research, design, and advocacy for student-centered policies that promote college affordability and accountability, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) applauds and thanks you and your legislative colleagues for the funding to begin implementation of the Cal Grant Reform Act enacted in 2022. With the phase-in approach in your Legislative budget plan, you ensure that more students will have access to the aid they need to pursue their college and career training dreams. We stand ready to work with you and the Administration to see Cal Grant reform adopted in the final budget so that over time we grow the amount of aid available to low-income students and increase access to grants for an estimated 137,000 newly eligible students.

Financial aid is critical for many students as they consider how they will afford their postsecondary education. The Legislature's commitment to Cal Grant reform recognizes the value of a streamlined process for students and families and moves us closer to covering the total cost of education rather than just tuition/fees by indexing the award for community college students to grow overtime. The Legislative budget plan takes a first step in fully implementing this important reform that accomplishes an expansion to both depth and breadth of financial aid.

The state’s fiscal condition makes pulling the “trigger” difficult per the prior budget agreement on Cal Grant reform. However, we believe taking a first step in moving this vital policy change forward is important and support a legislative approach that puts us on a path to full implementation of Cal Grant Reform. The phase-in will commence in the 2025-26 academic year with applications submitted to the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) beginning this fall. It is important to note that under this proposal only a one-time investment is necessary for the first three years of implementation. Ultimately, we support an equitable phased-in
approach that protects and increases access to financial aid for adult learners, student parents, first-generation, and low-income students who have been shut out of our outdated Cal Grant program.

We support your work and appreciate all that you are doing to make financial aid accessible for more students. We look forward to working with you to see this enacted in the final 2024-25 state budget.

Sincerely,

Emmanuel Rodriguez  
Director of Policy and Advocacy, California  
The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)

CC:  The Honorable David Alvarez, Chair Assembly Subcommittee on Education Finance  
Senator John Laird, Chair Senate Subcommittee on Education Finance  
Jason Sisney, Budget Director Office of the Assembly Speaker  
Chris Woods, Budget Director Office of the Senate Pro Tempore