

AB 2458 (Berman)

Greater Accessibility, Information, Notice, and Support (GAINS) for Student Parents Act

SUMMARY

AB 2458 would help student parents afford, enroll in, and successfully complete their higher education journey. Specifically, this bill would ensure that student parents obtain the financial aid they are eligible to receive by taking into account their childcare expenses and require campuses to collect and report data to advance student parent success.

BACKGROUND

California is home to approximately 300,000 undergraduate student parents, 61 percent of which are first-generation college students and 72 percent are students of color.¹ The cost of college, including childcare, is one of their biggest barriers to accessing and completing higher education.² In fact, despite having higher grade point averages than non-parenting peers, they are less likely to complete a degree or certificate.³

While student parents have additional childcare expenses than their non-parenting peers, these costs are not accounted for in the college's estimate of a student parent's cost of attendance. Federal regulations allow financial

aid officers to adjust a student's cost of attendance to include the expenses incurred for dependent care, however, institutions often do not take full advantage of this federal flexibility.

Instead, students are forced to individually request an adjustment – a “[dependent care allowance](#)” – from financial aid officers if they even know this is an option. In some cases, student parents may be asked to provide further proof of their dependent care costs or be incorrectly denied adjustments. This process is not well understood nor consistently applied across institutions, resulting in unnecessary burdens on students and financial aid administrators. In fact, the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that student parents are not maximizing their federal financial aid.⁴

Further, because campuses are not required to uniformly identify student parents, limited data exists. As a result, their needs and academic and workforce outcomes unfortunately continue to be overlooked. Without accessible, accurate, and actionable data, student parents are not able to be provided the targeted support they need to succeed in higher education.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2023). [\[Data set\]](#). 2019–20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study Administrative Collection (NPSAS:20-AC) [\[Data set\]](#).

² Goldrick-Rab, S., Welton, C.R., & Coca, V. Hope Center for College, Community and Justice. (2020). [Parenting while in college: Basic needs insecurity among students with children.](#)

³ Institute for Women's Policy Research & Ascend at the Aspen Institute. (April 2019). [Parents in college: By the numbers.](#)

⁴ GAO (2019). [Higher Education: More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid.](#)

THIS BILL

To ensure student parents can access the financial aid they are eligible to receive and improve student parent success, AB 2458 would:

- Require the development and implementation of a policy to estimate and adjust cost of attendance information for student parents to better account for their childcare expenses (aka dependent care allowance), thereby ensuring that student parents obtain the financial aid they are eligible to receive;
- Require institutions to uniformly collect and report data on student parents;
- Share student parent data with the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data for inclusion in the longitudinal data system, allowing California to evaluate and identify policies that support student parent success; and
- Add additional student parent services and resources to each campus' existing student parent web page, such as information on federal and state tax credits, CalWORKs, and the dependent care allowance.

Comprehensively identifying student parents and increasing their access to financial aid will allow student parents to better afford, enroll in, and successfully complete their higher education journey.

SUPPORT

The California Alliance for Student Parent Success (co-sponsor)
California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy (co-sponsor)
The Education Trust – West (co-sponsor)
Cal State Student Association (co-sponsor)
Michelson Center for Public Policy (co-sponsor)
uAspire (co-sponsor)
John Burton Advocates for Youth

OPPOSITION

None on File

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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