
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: AB 1145
Author: Medina
Version: May 6, 2015
Urgency: No
Consultant: Kathleen Chavira
Hearing Date: June 24, 2015
Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Pupils: Early Commitment to College program

SUMMARY

This bill modifies and expands existing reporting requirements regarding the Early Commitment to College program.

BACKGROUND

Existing law establishes the Early Commitment to College (ECC) program, a voluntary program in which school districts may participate for the purpose of providing schoolwide college information and college preparation events. Under the program, a student signs a pledge declaring a commitment to prepare for college, finish high school, and enroll in college. In addition, the student commits to meeting all high school graduation requirements, enrolling in college preparatory coursework, seeking to achieve proficiency in math and English, completing the federal application for student aid, submitting a grade point average to the Student Aid Commission and meeting application and other requirements for university admission or community college enrollment within 12 months of high school graduation. (Education Code § 54710-54716)

Existing law requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to submit data relating to the ECC program to the Legislature on the number of districts and pupils participating, the number of pupils who fulfilled the requirements of the pledge, and any relevant outcome data reported by districts by November 1, 2017. (EC § 54715)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Modifies existing reporting requirements regarding the Early Commitment to College Program. It:
 - a) Requires the SPI to submit the specified data to the LAO, rather than the Legislature.
 - b) Changes the year by which the SPI must report the data from 2017 to 2016.
 - c) Eliminates the requirement that the SPI report include recommendations on the program's continuance.

- 2) Requires the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to submit a report by November 1, 2017 to the Legislature relating to the Early Commitment program. It:
 - a) Requires that the report include the data gathered by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI).
 - b) Establishes the following new elements to be included in the report:
 - i) To the extent available, data on the rate of enrollment of program participants in university or other postsecondary educational program.
 - ii) Local or state factors contributing to the program's success/failure.
 - iii) The level of technical expertise and guidance provided to school districts by the SPI.
 - c) Requires that LAO make a recommendation on the program's continuance as part of the report.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, there has been a lack of support and funding for completion of the reporting requirements relative to implementation of the Early Commitment to College program. According to the California Department of Education (CDE), staffing changes, coupled with the reduction in resources which occurred shortly after the original bill's passage have created challenges to the production of the required report. Without leadership and support, it does not appear that the CDE report will be useful to the Legislature in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the existing program. This bill is intended to ensure that the Legislature receives the information necessary to inform the creation of a stronger program that connects low-income students to higher education.
- 2) ***History of the program.*** SB 890 (Scott, Statutes of 2008) established the Early College Commitment program, a voluntary program administered by the SPI. Districts volunteering to participate in this program are required to undertake a variety of activities aimed at increasing high school completion rates and motivating pupils to take rigorous college preparatory or career technical coursework. It also provides participating pupils a California Community College (CCC) fee waiver for two or more years of enrollment, as long as the pupil is a California resident and continues to show financial need on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The program sunsets on January 1, 2019.

According to the Campaign for College Opportunity, the original sponsors of the bill, the Early Commitment to College (ECC) program was a way for California to renew the 1960 Master Plan (that any California student with interest in attending college, could pursue a college education in California), and for the first time, make college directly accessible to students and their families beginning in middle school.

According to the CDE, the ECCP was launched by the CDE in 2009, but under the prior administration, never requested or received funding to administer the program.

The California Department of Education (CDE) did send information to school districts as required, and post program information on its website. However, no data has been collected about program participation, and CDE currently has no information on the number of districts that are participating.

- 3) **CDE Status/LAO Capacity.** The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) is currently responsible for a large number of statutorily required evaluations, at least six of which are required in 2017, and in recent years has increasingly been assigned responsibility for reports in the area of higher education policy. This is likely due to the elimination of the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) in 2011. These reports are in addition to the existing responsibilities of the LAO.

As drafted, this bill would still require the CDE to administer the program and collect the data, so it is unclear whether incorporation of the LAO addresses the underlying concerns which resulted in the bill. In addition, the CDE reports that it is their intent to comply with the reporting requirements and has begun to discuss information gathering methodology and timelines for completing the statutorily required report.

Staff recommends the bill be amended to delete the LAO reporting responsibilities and to incorporate the new reporting requirements into the existing statute as part of the SPI report.

Staff further recommends the bill be amended to require the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to inform the appropriate legislative committees of their plans for complying with the reporting requirements by January 31, 2016.

SUPPORT

California School Boards Association
Campaign for College Opportunity
Dave Jones, Insurance Commissioner

OPPOSITION

None received.

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