

## SB 837 (Reyes): Equitable College Access and Financial Aid Awareness Act

### SUMMARY

SB 837 addresses barriers to financial aid by requiring the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to create financial aid guidelines for school districts to utilize online platforms that improve access to financial aid for low-income students, foster care youth and undocumented students

### BACKGROUND

California is home to a large population of undocumented, low-income, foster, and homeless youth who are eligible for tuition-free college. Obstacles to graduating are particularly prevalent among low-income students with 22% of California college students from families earning \$35,000 or less complete a bachelor's degree. Access to financial aid resources can be a determinant to whether a student considers dropping out of college. Financial challenges are the number one reason students consider leaving college.<sup>1</sup> CSAC provides support for students to apply for a variety of financial aid programs like California Chafee Grant for Foster Youth (Chafee Grant), the California

Dream Act Application, the Cal Grant, and the FAFSA. Despite various opportunities available for people to get financial support, students still find cost as a huge deterrent to completing their degrees and cause of stress.<sup>2</sup>

With clearer guidance to apply and receive aid, students can feel less overwhelmed about how to pay for their education. Currently, the traditional method of having students figure out their financial aid options through their school counselors has been hindered by the counselor-to-student ratio in California which is 464:1.<sup>3</sup> Many students are unfortunately left without vital guidance. Alternatively, technology platforms can be used to more quickly connect students to aid.

California needs to utilize modern solutions to find ways to support our most vulnerable students.

### THIS BILL

This bill would require CSAC to develop guidelines for school districts to utilize

<sup>1</sup> Sallie Mae. (2024). How America Completes College.  
[https://www.salliemae.com/content/dam/slm/writtencontent/Research/SLM\\_How-America-Completes-College-Research-report.pdf](https://www.salliemae.com/content/dam/slm/writtencontent/Research/SLM_How-America-Completes-College-Research-report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Marken, S. (2025, March 26). Black, Hispanic students at greatest risk of leaving program. Gallup.com.  
<https://news.gallup.com/poll/611093/black-hispanic->

[students-greatest-risk-leaving-program.aspx](#)

<sup>3</sup> California's student-to-counselor ratio was 464:1 in the 2021–22 school year, far exceeding the recommended 250:1 ratio set by the American School Counselor Association. Source: California School Boards Association (2023):  
<https://blog.csba.org/school-counselor-ratios/#:~:text=Home%20to%20roughly%205.85%20million,was%20larger%20at%205.89%20million>

CAPITOL OFFICE  
1021 O STREET  
SUITE 7210  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814  
TEL (916) 651-4029

DISTRICT OFFICE  
301 E. VANDERBILT WAY  
SUITE 400  
SAN BERNARDINO CA 92408  
TEL (909) 888-5360

# California State Senate

SENATOR  
**ELOISE GÓMEZ REYES**  
TWENTY-NINTH SENATE DISTRICT



COMMITTEES:  
EDUCATION  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
HOUSING  
JUDICIARY  
LEGISLATIVE ETHICS  
RULES

technology platforms for low-income students, foster care youth and undocumented families. These guidelines shall ensure that these students receive financial aid information that:

- Provides clear, accurate, and comprehensive information about the final cost of college/universities and the availability of financial aid, specifically tailored to students' unique educational and financial circumstances.
- Highlights colleges that meet 100% of demonstrated financial need for qualifying students.
- Includes specific tools for foster youth and undocumented students to ensure equitable access, with a required display of foster and DACA-specific results.
- Requires that financial aid platforms provide information in multiple languages and include financial counseling, videos, and guidance resources to faculty, parents, and students.

## SUPPORT

Los Amigos de la Comunidad (Sponsor)  
La Cooperativa Campesina de California  
(Sponsor)  
Victor M. Gordo, Mayor, City of Pasadena  
Kathryn Barger, Supervisor, Los Angeles County  
Stars  
First Day Foundation, Inc.

## CONTACT

Mmeli Ugochukwu, Senate Fellow  
[Mmeli.Ugochukwu@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Mmeli.Ugochukwu@sen.ca.gov)  
916-651-4029