**SAMPLE SUPPORT LETTER AB 274 (Bryan) – Student Eligibility for Non-Means tested Student Assistance**

Letters must be submitted on the [Position Letter Portal](https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/)*.*

 [DATE]

The Honorable [Senator/Assemblymember First Name Last Name], Chair

Senate/Assembly Committee Name

Street Address, Suite XX

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 274 (Bryan) – CalWORKS/CalFresh exemptions (SUPPORT)**

Dear Chair [Last Name]:

On behalf of [Organization’s name], I am writing in support of AB 274 that will exempt all student grants, loans, fellowships, and scholarships as a form of income for the purposes of CalWORKs and apply any exemption under CalWORKs to CalFresh.

[Include a paragraph about your organization specific knowledge of need for this bill]

According to the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), only 27% of community college students who receive CalWORKs funding complete a credential program or successfully transfer to a four-year college. In 2019, the California Community College Chancellor’s Office College identified increasing financial aid to cover total costs of college, including living expenses, to boost credential or degree completion. Despite the colleges’ best efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic and rising housing prices have made higher education even more inaccessible, especially for low-income students.

Currently, federal law gives California the option to exempt any form of income for CalFresh that is already exempt for CalWORKs. It also gives California the ability to exempt all educational funding as income for the purposes of the two programs. In 2022, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 288 (Calderon) into law, which prohibited colleges in California from reducing a low-income student’s financial aid when they earn a private grant, a practice known as scholarship displacement.

Despite banning colleges from practicing scholarship displacement, the state still punishes CalWORKs and CalFresh recipients by reducing their state assistance if they earn any merit-based grants and scholarships.

CalWORKs students must balance their academic pursuits with providing for their child. They face the additional barrier of completing their credentials within 24 months; after this period, they are required to work 20 hours or more a week to continue receiving cash aid from the state. By counting merit-based educational funding against their cash aid, the state forces low-income student parents to choose between two vital forms of assistance, neither of which is enough to support both the student and their dependent(s).

AB 274 will exempt all student grants, loans, fellowships, or scholarships as a form of income for the purposes of CalWORKs and CalFresh eligibility. This will allow our state’s most vulnerable students, CalWORKs and CalFresh recipients, to access the maximum amount of CalWORKs and/or CalFresh funding available to them.

It is for these reasons, [Name of Organization] is pleased to SUPPORT AB 274.

Sincerely,

<INSERT SIGNATURE BLOCK>