



**Summary:**

This bill would allow low-income student parents enrolled in college fulltime to receive full CalWORKs benefits for up to four years and receive funds to purchase books prior to the beginning of the academic term.

**Issue:**

By 2025, California will face a shortfall of 1 million college graduates.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, college students in California are experiencing unprecedented levels of housing and food insecurity, making a college education less accessible, especially for low-income students.

A college education is even more difficult to attain for student parents on CalWORKs. After their first year as college students on CalWORKs, student parents must work an additional 20-30 hours to receive full CalWORKs benefits. Not only is it difficult to be a parent, full time student, and work 20-30 hours all at the same time, but if a student parent on CalWORKs does not meet their work hour requirement, they can have their benefits reduced. This effectively punishes low-income parents for seeking a college education.

Furthermore, some CalWORKs student parents are unable to buy their books before classes begin because they do not receive their funds from the county in time. In these scenarios, students either do not buy their books, which puts them behind in their coursework, or they buy their books with their own funds or on credit, further straining them financially.

**Existing Law:**

Existing law establishes the CalWORKs program to provide cash assistance and other services for low-income families through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance

through a combination of state, county, and federal TANF funds.

In order to qualify for CalWORKs benefits, recipients must generally be low-income, unemployed, and have dependents. CalWORKs recipients are generally allowed to receive CalWORKs benefits for up to four years, although the majority of recipients do not stay on CalWORKs for that long.<sup>2</sup>

College students on CalWORKs can currently receive full benefits for up to a year. However, after their first year, they must do an additional 20-30 hours of “core” activities to receive full benefits, or they will have their benefits reduced. These core activities can include work or job training.

Existing law allows students to receive funds to purchase books for their classes, however, counties are not required to give out these funds before the academic term begins.

**Proposal:**

This bill would allow CalWORKs recipients enrolled in college full time to receive full CalWORKs benefits. This bill would also allow these students to receive funds to purchase books prior to the beginning of their academic term.

**Support:**

- The California Coalition of Welfare Rights Organization (CCWRO)

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<sup>2</sup> Dept. of Social Services