

CHAD MAYES

ASSEMBLY REPUBLICAN LEADER



AB 227: Improving Opportunity for CalWORKs Recipients to Exit Poverty through Education

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill 227 would create the Educational Opportunity and Attainment Program that would provide education incentive grants to CalWORKs recipients to encourage and support low-income parents who reach certain educational goals and create additional work-study slots and support services for CalWORKs recipients pursuing their education.

AB 227 helps give struggling parents the support and resources they need to help their families and improve their lives.

BACKGROUND

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program is California's implementation of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. It provides cash aid and services to low-income California families.

PROBLEM

In California's high skill economy, it is nearly impossible to get a good middle class job without a college degree, let alone a high school diploma. This is a significant barrier to mobility when as many as 65% of CalWORKs recipients do not even have a high school education.

According to studies published by the Brookings Institution and Pew Charitable Trusts, postsecondary education boosts social mobility, particularly among low-income individuals.

Research from the University of Michigan shows that a parent's level of education has positive effects on his or her child's level of success into middle adulthood— independent of the parent's level of income.

While the long-term benefits are clear, parents are struggling to prioritize education while juggling the day-to-day challenge of living in poverty.

There is some evidence that offering financial incentives works to encourage and support people to invest their efforts in a long-term goal. CalWORKs does not currently offer these incentives or supports.

SOLUTION

AB 227 would establish the Educational Opportunity and Attainment Program that would provide a supplemental education incentive grant when a CalWORKs recipient reaches an educational milestone, as outlined below:

- High school diploma or equivalent: \$100/month
- Associate's degree or CTE program: \$200/month
- Bachelor's degree: \$300/month

Additionally, the bill would appropriate \$20 million to partially restore funding to the California Community Colleges CalWORKs program, which provides work-study positions, education and career counseling, and other services to CalWORKs recipients.

The bill would not add any new requirements to the existing CalWORKs program, nor would it reduce benefits. It would simply provide CalWORKs recipients with support to reach educational goals. By doing so, AB XX will improve the well-being of low-income California families and help them exit poverty.

SUPPORT

- Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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