

August 20, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Room 3086, California State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 928 (Berman)—SUPPORT

As Amended July 15, 2021

Dear Chair Portantino:

We write to you today as a coalition of former California community college and current University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) student leaders to express our wholehearted support for Assembly Bill 928: The Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act of 2021 by Assemblymember Marc Berman. As student leaders, we were entrusted with elevating and serving the needs of college and university students across the state. **Our support for AB 928 fulfills our duty to support policy that directly aims to simplify and strengthen a confusing transfer maze for thousands of community college students, helping them more efficiently achieve transfer.** AB 928 will eliminate significant points of confusion in the transfer process, establish state-level accountability for improved transfer rates, and ensure more accessible reentry points to a college education.

Transfer from California Community Colleges to public four-year and private non-profit universities is central to the state's promise to its students that an accessible and affordable higher education is attainable. Most community college students attend a two-year with the hopes of seeing that promise fulfilled. **However, we have experienced firsthand the unforgiving realities of the transfer process.** A complicated transfer process filled with inconsistent advising, a maze of pathways, and confusing requirements across the systems extend our time-to-degree and pushes many students out of the system completely. **A degree that should take two years to complete takes four years for 19 percent of all students with transfer goals, and six years for 28 percent of students.**¹ What is worse, so many others never reach their college goals of transfer, leaving the community colleges with no degree to show for their time.

Further, our community colleges serve large numbers of Black, Latinx, Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI), undocumented, low-income, and first-generation students. **As such, it is paramount that the system that serves our most vulnerable populations provides them with the guidance and support necessary to successfully transfer.** Unfortunately, that is not the case, as only 35 percent of Latinx students with a transfer goal do so within four years and only five percent of Black students transfer within that time frame.¹ **Failing to support our students in successfully transferring in a timely manner leads to increased college costs**

¹ Johnson, Hans; Mejia Cuellar, Marisol. [Increasing Community College Transfers: Progress and Barriers](#). Public Policy Institute of California. September 2020.

and perpetuates the existence of racial equity gaps for our most vulnerable students in the process. That is why we believe AB 928 will be vital to elevating opportunities for historically underserved students.

The Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) was created in 2010 with explicit goals to facilitate easier transfer between community colleges and four-year universities, to reduce excess credit accumulation and time to degree, and to guarantee CSU transfer students with junior standing upon transfer to ensure they can graduate and join our workforce as quickly as possible. **Ten years later, over 280,000 community college students have earned an ADT in over 40 ADT major pathways and have saved tens of millions of dollars, with over \$10 million in savings in 2019-2020 alone.**² Despite its success, there are too many students who are not aware of the ADT pathways and the ways that it could complement their college journey, not only academically but financially.

Too often, we are thrown into the community college system without proper guidance or resources, left to navigate a lengthy transfer process, which results in taking additional units we don't need and spending money neither we nor the state can afford to waste. Should AB 928 be implemented, **California could save over \$173 million per transfer cohort** through the establishment of a singular transfer pathway between the UC and CSU, and the average community college student would accrue about 6.5 less credits, amounting to approximately \$300 in savings per student, money that could go toward other life necessities.³ **Building on the promised benefits of the ADT can ensure more of us can make our college dreams a reality, while saving time and money.**

AB 928 will build on a decade-old promise to transform our transfer process to be in true service of students with three key provisions:

1. **Establish an intersegmental implementation committee** to increase cross-system collaboration and coordination to ensure consistent communication about the ADT and its benefits. It will also ensure that our systems are being strategic in streamlining ADT pathways and getting students on the right path to a bachelor's degree. **Coordinated communication efforts will make certain that students receive accurate and consistent information we need to stay on track on our college paths, decreasing time and money spent.**
2. **Create a singular lower division general education pathway between the UC and CSU** which should meet the academic requirements necessary for transfer admission to both systems. **Many students must choose between potentially attending a UC or CSU early on in their community college journey, pushing them out of opportunity to attend the university of their choice.** We are often overwhelmed by the numerous pathways and options to transfer, once again leading to excess credit accumulation, extended time to degree, and increased college costs. Having a singular General Education pathway

² *Chutes or Ladders: Strengthening California Community College Transfer So More Students Earn the Degrees They Seek.* The Campaign for College Opportunity. July 2021.

³ Ibid.

will eliminate confusing decision points and can ensure we have the option to attend the system of our choice.

3. **Make the default placement pathway the ADT for students with a stated intent to transfer**, should a pathway exist within our intended major. Not all students are aware of the different options we have when entering a community college, and not all counselors have enough availability or resources to advise the high number of student caseloads with limited time. It is easy for students to “fall through the cracks,” but starting off with an ADT if it meets our transfer goals can set us on a quicker timeline for transfer.

As former community college students, many of us reaped the undeniable benefits of the ADT during our time at the community colleges and want all community college students to have that same benefit, not just the ones who were lucky enough to have the proper resources. All students deserve to have a transfer system that increases college access, supports our success, and improves degree completion in a timely manner.

We understand our needs and what will serve California college students best, and we believe it is time to be bold and transformative in doing what is in true service of student success and opportunity. For these reasons, we strongly urge an AYE vote on AB 928.

Sincerely,*

Gabriel Alfaro

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* Title and organizations are for identification purposes only.