



The Education Trust–West

Fierce advocates
for educational
justice, pre-k
through
college.

May 2, 2024

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1020 N Street, Room 173
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 1780 (Ting) - Ending Legacy Admissions – As Amended April 17, 2024 Support

Dear Chair Wicks,

On behalf of EdTrust-West, we are proud to support AB 1780 (Ting), especially as an organization committed to advancing policies and practices that dismantle the racial and economic barriers embedded in California’s education system.

California is home to many of the nation’s premier colleges and universities. Attendance at these universities is prized because they ostensibly only admit the most meritorious students. But some private universities in California still give significant preferential treatment to students who are related to alumni or donors through a practice known as “legacy admissions.” AB 1780 stops the use of legacy admissions in California by prohibiting institutions that still practice it from being publicly subsidized through the Cal Grant program.

In 2019, the “Operation Varsity Blues” scandal highlighted the many legal ways wealth and social connections skew the college admissions process. In response, the Governor signed AB 697 (Ting) in 2019 to bring transparency to the use of legacy admissions in California.

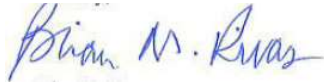
Legacy admissions have again come back to the forefront with the 2023 Supreme Court decision banning the use of affirmative action policies in admissions. Affirmative action policies are intended to improve educational and employment opportunities for traditionally marginalized groups. With this Supreme Court decision, the concern over how legacy admissions benefit the already privileged has resulted in nationwide conversations about stopping the practice. Studies conducted at elite universities have consistently shown legacy admissions practices disproportionately benefit wealthy and white applicants.

The Cal Grant program was created to promote the goals of educational equity and access for all Californians by using public dollars to subsidize the cost of higher education. Institutions that give special advantage to the family of alumni or donors are engaging in a practice that directly conflicts with those goals while continuing to receive public funding.

AB 1780 continues the work of AB 697 by prohibiting colleges and universities that give preference to legacy and/or donor applicants from receiving public Cal Grant dollars. This will ensure that public dollars are only being spent at institutions that give all Californians a fair opportunity to be admitted to their dream school, regardless of who their parents are.

For the above reasons, we strongly encourage you to support AB 1780.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian M. Rivas". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Brian Rivas

Senior Director of Policy and Government Relations

Cc: Assemblymember Ting