



The Education Trust–West

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

May 7, 2024

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

**Re: AB 2165 (Reyes) Financial Aid and Transparency Act – As Amended April 15, 2024
Support**

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

As an organization committed to advancing policies and practices that dismantle the racial and economic barriers embedded in California’s education system, the EdTrust-West is pleased to support for Assembly Bill 2165 (Reyes).

The bill aims to help increase transparency and accountability by ensuring that high school counselors communicate with their students and students’ parents when students are opted out from the requirement to complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) form and by requiring that data be provided to school districts regarding opt-out forms.

The completion of FAFSA and Dream Act applications presents an enormous opportunity for low-income and other traditionally underserved populations to obtain a postsecondary education. AB 2165 represents a crucial step forward in ensuring that all students, regardless of their circumstances, have equitable access to financial aid opportunities for higher education. By fostering open dialogue between counselors, students, and parents, AB 2165 empowers families to make informed decisions about their educational futures.

After only one year of implementation of the universal financial aid policy there has been a [17.5% increase](#) in FAFSA completion and a [1.6% increase](#) in CADAA completion. The largest increase in FAFSA completion came from low-income schools as well as schools where over 40% of students identify as students of color – who both saw a 10% increase (AB 469).

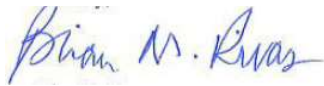
In 2021, California passed AB 469 (Reyes) which required schools to ensure that high school

seniors complete and submit the FAFSA or CADAA before graduating. AB 469 also allowed for students to be opted out for this requirement by students themselves, their parent or guardian, or a school counselor. AB 2165 builds upon the foundation of AB 469 by ensuring students receive information about financial aid while also guaranteeing equitable access to critical financial resources.

This bill promotes communication between high school counselors, students, and parents regarding opt-out decisions from FAFSA or CADAA requirements, ensuring that vital information reaches all stakeholders.

For those reasons, we urge you to support AB 2165 to ensure transparency and accountability when students are opted out from the requirement to submit financial aid applications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian M. Rivas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Brian Rivas

Senior Director of Policy and Government Relations

cc: Assembly Majority Leader Emerita Eloise Gomez Reyes
Natasha Collins, Assembly Appropriations Consultant