



**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 2500 (Mike Fong): Student financial aid: application deadlines: postponement- As Amended March 19, 2024  
SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Mike Fong:

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 AB 2500 by Assemblymember Mike Fong.

This bill streamlines the process for extending the deadline for submitting financial aid applications and provides the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) the authority to approve requests when received, and grant extensions without requests in declared states of emergency.

This measure increases the requesting period from 10 days after the conclusion of an event to 15 days to provide LEAs and higher education institutions more time to request an extension. Finally, the bill requires CSAC staff to regularly report to the Commissioners on extension requests.

Qualifying events are those that occur at no fault of the student but prevents them from applying for aid on time, including natural disasters, states of emergencies, and labor actions. State financial aid primarily consists of the Cal Grant and Middle Class Scholarship programs, totaling \$2.9 billion. This aid is crucial for more than 350,000 recipients to achieve access to higher education and contribute to California's economy.

The current administrative process for extending the deadline for submitting financial aid applications makes it difficult for CSAC to support students in a timely manner when unprecedented circumstances prevent them from submitting their financial aid application. For example, most recently, the rollout of the Better FAFSA created difficulties for students attempting to complete the FAFSA.

CSAC attempted to use the administrative route for extending the deadline but given the current lengthy and complicated process CSAC used the legislative route instead as it ensured the deadline could be extended in a much quicker timeline. This was critical because as of March 29, FAFSA submissions rates in California have been down by 33.3% as compared to last year with larger drops seen in schools with a high concentration of low-income students and students of color, therefore students needed added additional time to apply. The Better FAFSA rollout shows us that when unanticipated issues or events occur our most vulnerable students are most impacted thus state leaders need to be able to act quickly to mitigate impact for our low-income, students of color.

CSAC has also shared their observation that eligible LEAs are underutilizing the request for extensions, particularly those in rural areas. There were 4,106 late financial aid applications submitted between March 3rd and April 1st, 2018, hindering access for those students. Students who submit late applications lose tens of thousands of dollars in aid. States of emergencies declared by the Governor, or the President of the United States demonstrate the existence of relevant circumstances and should not require approval by the Commission.

For those reason, we urge your support for AB 2500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian M. Rivas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" being the most prominent.

Brian Rivas  
Senior Director of Policy and Government Relations

Cc: Assemblymember Mike Fong  
Natasha Collins, Assembly Appropriations Consultant