

Assembly Bill 891 (Campos) Student Success Act of 2015

Assembly Assistant Democratic Leader Nora Campos (D-San Jose)

Issue:

AB 891 takes a multifaceted approach to address the disturbing fact that roughly 70% of children born into poverty will remain in poverty. It does this by: Providing free public transportation to school for low income students, by increasing availability and access to afterschool activities, and increasing support programs for low-income students.

Problem:

Studies have shown that removing the barriers to academic success has the power to level the playing field and enable low-income students to achieve economic security and to thrive as adults.

Transit Equity

According to a 2014 report by the California Attorney General, poverty, especially deep poverty, is a significant cause of truancy. **The inability to afford transportation to and from school is one of the most frequently cited barriers that low-income youth face in attending school.** School busses are no longer sufficient, as their funding is continually being reduced and routes are being consolidated or cut. A survey of Oakland youth found that 61% of students reported they sometimes use their lunch money to ride the bus.

Barriers to After-School Programs

Additionally, research shows that access to afterschool and summer programs improves students' health and academic outcomes. Unfortunately, low-income youth face many challenges in participating in these programs, including lack of transportation after hours, long wait-lists, and program enrollment fees.

Support Programs

The California Department of Social Services currently administers a program to help pregnant and parenting youth stay in school. This program has proven to improve graduation rates of pregnant and parenting teens that are living in poverty. However, while we know that teens that drop out of school are more likely to become pregnant, **there is no program aimed at supporting their return to school after they drop out or have high absentee rates.**

With more than 1 in 5 California children living in poverty, the state needs comprehensive policies to remove the structural barriers that trap children in cyclical ongoing poverty.

AB 891 asks the state to prioritize our poorest youth, so we can make sure that they fully benefit from the education that the California Constitution guarantees them.

This Bill:

AB 891 would close the school achievement gap and increase opportunity for California's poorest youth by:

- 1. Free Public Transportation to Low-Income Students**
Guaranteeing free transportation to school for students with incomes below 185% of the Federal Poverty Line and to all students attending very low income schools.
- 2. Increased Access to Afterschool Activities**
Giving priority and free access to afterschool activities for homeless and poor youth.
- 3. More Support Programs to Low-Income Youth**
Requiring the Department of Social Services to establish several proactive initiatives aimed at increasing educational outcomes of CaWORKS youth. These initiatives include establishing a youth jobs program, incentivizing high school graduation, and providing transportation to afterschool and summer programs.

Support

- Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)
- Children's Defense Fund-California (Sponsor)
- 9to5 Natl. Association of Working Women (Sponsor)

For More Information

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