



Kriss Worthington

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CONSENT CALENDAR
 May 18, 2010

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington
 Councilmember Jesse Arreguin

Subject: Oppose Elimination of the Cal Grant Program

RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter urging Governor Schwarzenegger not to eliminate the Cal Grant Program from the state budget.

BACKGROUND

The social and economic health of our state relies on increasing the number of Californians who complete a college degree. Unfortunately, rising college costs threaten to put higher education out of reach for many. As college costs in our state skyrocket, it is imperative that student financial aid keeps pace. Any imbalance will result in more students working long hours at the expense of academics; graduating – or not graduating at all – with increasingly higher levels of debt; and prospective students opting out of higher education altogether because it is unaffordable.

Yet the Governor has proposed eliminating the competitive Cal Grant, and broader, deeper cuts to the program are likely to be floated later in the year.

The Cal Grant Program, the state's primary need-based financial aid program, allows over 300,000 students each year to access higher education and the social and economic benefits it provides. Cal Grants cover tuition and fee costs at public universities, and also help many students at all types of colleges pay for books and supplies. As college costs – including not just tuition and fees but also textbooks and living expenses – continue to rise, the Cal Grant program has helped keep college within reach for low and middle-income students. The short-term savings of these cuts do not nearly justify the long-term damage they would do to our youth and our economy.

For 2009-10, 245,400 qualified applicants vied for just 22,500 Competitive Cal Grants – a 42% increase in applicants from the 2008-09 academic year, with no increase in available grants. That is equal to one grant for every eleven applicants. The Governor's proposed budget would eliminate these grants altogether.

California needs more college graduates, not less, in order to turn our economy around. Any cuts to the Cal Grant Program will undermine students' ability to attend or successfully complete college. While some budget cuts are inevitable given the state's massive deficit, Sacramento must preserve investments in California's economic recovery and growth. The Cal Grant Program is one of these critical investments, and to send a letter to the Governor opposing this elimination would be highly beneficial.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

CONTACT PERSON

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