

April 3, 2023

The Honorable Dr. Corey Jackson
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 870 (Arambula) - Support for County Liaison for Higher Education Best Practices Working Groups

Dear Assembly Member Jackson,

San Diego Hunger Coalition writes to express our support for Assembly Bill 870 (Arambula), a bill that increases student awareness of essential services by encouraging the sharing between County Liaisons of best practices and successful approaches.

In 2021, California passed AB 1326 (Arambula), which requires county human service agencies to designate at least one employee as a staff liaison to serve as a point of contact for colleges and universities within that county. AB 870 will build on this success by ensuring higher education liaisons, county staff, and other stakeholders meet regularly to discuss improving the experiences and increasing public benefits enrollment among the college student population.

College is hard enough without worrying about where your next meal will come from or where you will sleep, yet the pandemic has exacerbated these worries. In a survey of California students conducted by the Student Aid Commission, about half of the respondents reported increased monthly housing expenses and increased weekly food costs during the pandemic, with students across intersectional identities such as race, class, gender, and immigration status experiencing disproportionately higher levels.

Individuals unable to meet their basic needs face short and long-term physical and mental health consequences. It can be devastating for college students as it negatively impacts their access, first-year retention, and academic success, leaving them more likely to drop out and undermining the investments that they and financial aid programs have made. Unfortunately, many students eligible for public benefits are not enrolled, which is a missed opportunity for students in need. This is especially troublesome given California's status as the state that provides the most funding for these programs. For instance, an estimate from CDSS shows that only about 18-30% of students eligible for CalFresh are enrolled; we know AB 870 will address this by improving the experiences of students in need and the community of social services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anahid Brakke".

Anahid Brakke
President & CEO

