



June 5, 2024

The Honorable Josh Newman Chair
Senate Education Committee
State Capitol Office, 1021 O Street, Suite 6520

Re: AB 2458 (Berman) - Support

Dear Chair Newman,

On behalf of New America, I would like to express strong support for Assembly Bill 2458, co-authored by Assemblymembers Marc Berman, Tasha Boerner, Dr. Joaquin Arambula, and Senator Monique Limón which would improve college affordability, access, and success for student parents in California.

New America's higher education program is a team of researchers, storytellers, and advocates from diverse backgrounds who engage in thoughtful analysis, shedding light on the thorniest issues in higher education and developing student-centered federal policy recommendations. We are dedicated to making higher education more equitable and accountable, fighting for inclusion rather than exclusivity, so that everyone has the chance to obtain an affordable, high quality education after high school. We are a voice for students, telling hard truths when institutional interests dominate policy discussions, making us well-suited to respond to this request. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our comments further, and our contact information is included at the end of this letter.

California is home to approximately 400,000 student parents, a majority of whom are first-generation and students of color. Despite having greater food, housing, child care, and transportation costs than their non-parenting peers, the costs are not accounted for in their student expense budgets. This creates barriers in accessing and completing higher education.

Currently, student parents have to individually request adjustments to their cost of attendance to account for their parenting expenses. In some cases, student parents are asked to provide further proof of their child-rearing costs or are incorrectly denied adjustments. This process is not standardized across institutions, resulting in unnecessary burdens on students and financial aid administrators. In fact, the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that student parents are not maximizing their federal financial aid.

Additionally, because campuses do not systematically identify student parents, the limited actionable data on their needs and outcomes makes it harder to design and provide tailored support.

AB 2458 would ensure student parents can access the financial aid they are entitled to and improve data collection for student parents. Specifically, the bill would:

1. Require automatic financial aid cost of attendance adjustments for student parents to better account for their expenses, thereby maximizing access to available financial aid;
2. Require institutions to uniformly collect and report data on student parents to system offices; and
3. Share student parent data from the higher education system offices with the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data for inclusion in the longitudinal data system, allowing California to evaluate and identify policies that support student parent success.

Comprehensively identifying student parents and increasing their access to financial aid will allow student parents to better plan for, afford, and navigate their educational pathways. We urge you to vote aye on AB 2458.

Sincerely,

New America's Higher Education Policy Program

Please contact Edward Conroy at conroy@newamerica.org with any questions.

CC: Members, Senate Education Committee