

AB 1691 (Medina)

Classified School Employee Summer Assistance Program Reform

PURPOSE

To make the Classified School Employee Summer Assistance Program (CSESAP) permanent, increase its funding to ensure a dollar-for-dollar match and expand it to include community college classified employees.

BACKGROUND

Classified employees are the backbone of our TK-12 schools and community colleges. They ensure schools are clean, that children are fed and get to school safely. However, many struggle financially. The typical school year is about ten months. Many classified employees who do not have twelve-month contracts with their districts do not work during the summer because it is difficult to find short-term employment.

Additionally, unlike other workers, classified school employees are not eligible for unemployment benefits during the summer, even if they cannot find a summer job. There have been legislative attempts to address this problem without much success. From 2013 to 2016, several bills were introduced that would have allowed classified employees to collect unemployment insurance during the summer; however, the bills were either vetoed or held on suspense.

In 2018, legislators created the Classified School Employee Summer Assistance Program. This program allows eligible, low-wage classified school employees who work for TK-12 school districts to set aside a small portion of their paychecks during the school year to receive up to a dollar-for-dollar match from the state during the summer when work is not available. School districts must elect to participate in CSESAP. In 2021, the legislature appropriated \$60 million for CSESAP.

THIS BILL

This bill would expand CSESAP eligibility to include classified employees at community colleges, make the program permanent with an ongoing appropriation, and increase program funding to \$90 million to ensure a full dollar-for-dollar match.

NEED FOR THE BILL

Classified employees are the lowest-paid school employees. Many are women and people of color. CSESAP has helped ease the financial burden for many classified employees, but some are still not eligible.

Under current law, classified employees who work at community colleges are not eligible to participate in CSESAP. This bill would include community college classified employees and create parity between all classified employees in the state.

Making CSESAP permanent will provide classified employees and local education agencies (LEAs) with the assurance that CSESAP will continue to exist and make clear that it is not just a short-term investment. This will give more LEAs the confidence they need to opt to participate in the program to help countless more classified employees. Without ongoing funding, stakeholders will continue to have to ask the legislature for support for the program each year. This can leave classified employees and LEAs feeling uncertain about CSESAP's future.

Under current law, CDE can use appropriations for CSESAP from any year to provide classified employees with up to a dollar-for-dollar match. This short-term fix can create a funding deficit in future years. Increasing funding is a more impactful way to ensure a dollar-for-dollar match because it takes care of the problem before it arises instead of kicking the can down the road. Ensuring a dollar-for-dollar match will help classified employees financially plan for summer financial burdens.

SUPPORT

- California School Employees Association (co-sponsor)
- SEIU California (co-sponsor)

KEY CONTACTS

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