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BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 2 ON
EDUCATION FINANCE
LEGISLATIVE ETHICS

AB 469: FAFSA and DREAM Act Completion

SUMMARY

AB 469 requires Local Educational Agencies (LEA's) to ensure that high school seniors complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California Dream Act Application (CADAA).

EXISTING LAW/BACKGROUND

A low-income student who wants financial assistance to attend college must complete the FAFSA to access institutional, state, and federal aid such as grants, work-study jobs, and student loans. Similarly, the CADAA provides an opportunity for undocumented and nonresident documented students to apply for and receive state aid.

Despite having a higher than average state poverty rate, California in 2018 ranked 30th in the country for FAFSA completion. A recent analysis by Ed Source found that, in the year after the outbreak of COVID-19, FAFSA completion rates in California decreased by 11% and CADAA by 45%. The report noted that the decrease in applications was most significant among low-income students.

Many eligible students do not complete a financial aid form because they believe they are ineligible, had no information on how to apply, or thought that the forms were too much work. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of students who do not complete a financial aid application are from low-income backgrounds.

In 2018, California passed AB 2015 (Gomez Reyes) that requires public schools serving students in grade 9-12 to offer information on how to properly complete and submit a FAFSA and CADAA at least once before 12th grade. This

bill would build upon AB 2015's efforts by making sure students not only receive information about FAFSA/CADAA but also ensure all students submit a financial aid form so they can access critical financial resources.

Nationwide three states require completion of financial aid applications for graduating high school seniors they include: Louisiana, Texas, and Illinois. In Louisiana's first year of implementation, FAFSA application rates rose 26 percentage points to an overall completion rate of over 77%, making them the state with the highest FAFSA completion in the nation.

In 2017, California's own Val Verde Unified School District made financial aid application completion a graduation requirement and raised completion rates by 14% within the first year, with no adverse impact on high school graduation rates. Rancho Verde High School currently leads the state with one of the highest percentages of FAFSA/CADAA completion at 92%. Most recently, Paris Unified School District has joined this movement.

THIS BILL

AB 469 requires LEA's to ensure high schools seniors complete the FAFSA and CADAA before graduating. The intent of this bill is to improve students' access to financial aid resources that require completion of these forms, such as the Community College Promise program. By connecting students to critical financial aid, AB 469 supports the Governor's and legislature's vision to increase access to higher education.

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