

May 19, 2021

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez
Chair, Assembly Committee on Appropriations
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 469 (Reyes) Financial Aid Applications - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Gonzalez,

NextGen California respectfully requests your support of AB 469 (Reyes), which will require local education agencies to ensure that all high school seniors complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California DREAM Act application (CADAA) beginning in the 2021-22 academic year.

Despite the numerous campaigns and programs aimed at increasing FAFSA and CADAA completion rates, financial aid application completion rates are still alarmingly low. Over the last two years, nearly a half-million high school seniors did not complete a FAFSA or CADAA, leaving an estimated \$550 million in state and federal financial aid funding on the table annually. The COVID-19 pandemic has further disrupted application completion rates for many high school and college students, preventing them from receiving certain types of financial aid for college.

College affordability is a significant barrier facing low-income students in California as they pursue or consider pursuing a postsecondary education or certificate program. The fact that well over half of California's K-12 students are low-income should further motivate the state to have a laser-like focus on swiftly increasing financial aid application completion rates.

NextGen California prioritizes policies and programs that promote student success, and educational equity. Ensuring that every student completes the FAFSA and/or CADAA will provide opportunities for more students to pursue a postsecondary education equipped with all the available financial resources accessible to them – lessening the chances that they may have to take out a student loan. For the above reasons we respectfully request your “aye” vote on AB 469.

Sincerely,



Arnold Sowell Jr.
Executive Director, NextGen California