



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### NEW LEGISLATION TO HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE HEARING

**Sacramento, CA** – Next Tuesday, April 26th, new legislation from Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (AD-44) will be heard in the Higher Education Committee. [Assembly Bill 1705](#) will address remedial placement policies at California’s community colleges and help more students to achieve their educational goals. The bill is supported by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, the Student Senate for California Community Colleges, Students Making a Change, and a diverse coalition of higher education equity, research, civil rights, social justice, and student leadership organizations.

“We strongly support AB 1705 and urge the members of the Higher Education Committee to move the legislation forward,” said **Chidi Agu, Program Coordinator with Students Making a Change**, who will testify at the Higher Education Committee hearing. “This bill will make a tremendous difference for all kinds of students but especially our Black and Latinx students, who are too often steered into remedial classes where they lose time, money, and ultimately end up less likely to achieve their goals.”

AB 1705 builds off AB 705 (Irwin), a groundbreaking 2017 law that required the state’s community colleges to recognize high school coursework instead of relying on inaccurate and inequitable placement tests. It required that students be placed into English and math classes where they have the greatest chance to make progress toward a college degree.

Prior to this landmark change, the vast majority of California community college students were denied access to transferable, college-level English and math courses. Eighty percent of incoming students started in remedial classes that cost time and money but did not earn credit toward a bachelor’s degree.

“Over a decade of research has established that starting in a remedial class actually makes students less likely to earn a degree,” said **Dr. Christopher Nellum, Executive Director with The Education Trust-West**. “Millions of students were excluded from classes in which they could have been successful, and disproportionately, this impacted Black and Latinx students.”

AB 705 changed this by restricting colleges from requiring remedial courses. After AB 705 became law, there was a dramatic and unprecedented increase in students completing their classes at the state’s community colleges. [Student completion of transfer-level courses increased](#) from 49% to 67% in English and from 26% to 50% in math statewide (2015-2019). This amounts to more than 41,000 additional students who completed transfer-level English and more than 30,000 additional students who completed transfer-level math than before the law (2015-2019).

“Researchers have found that every group examined has higher completion starting in a transfer-level course than in a remedial one, including students often cited as ‘needing’ remedial classes,” said **Katie Hern, Co-Founder of the California Acceleration Project and a faculty member at Skyline College**. “This includes Asian, Black, and Hispanic students. Students with low GPAs. Students with disabilities. Veterans. Foster youth. Low-income students. We can’t identify any group that does better taking a remedial course first.”

Yet despite the clear evidence that changing placement policies benefits students, many of California’s community colleges have yet to implement the changes mandated by AB 705. As of fall 2020, only a [handful of colleges had achieved](#) 100% implementation of the law.

“California’s community colleges have continued to devote substantial resources to remedial math, despite evidence that these classes do not meet the AB 705 standard of maximizing student completion” said **Jetaun Stevens, Senior Staff Attorney with Public Advocates**. “This is especially true at colleges with over 2,000 Black students. Enrolling students in remedial courses drives racial inequity.”

AB 1705 provides clarity and additional guidance to help ensure all California community college students benefit from the success of AB 705. This legislation:

- Makes clear that colleges must enroll students in math and English classes where they have the greatest likelihood of completing degree and transfer requirements.
- Clarifies that colleges should not require students to repeat math and English classes they passed in high school.
- Provides greater protections to ensure that students are not required to take extra math and English courses that don't count towards their degree requirements.
- Clarifies that it is the responsibility of colleges to ensure that students have supports that help them make progress toward their goals.

“Research has demonstrated that when students are supported, they succeed at completing transfer-level courses at high rates,” **said Michele Siqueiros, President of the Campaign for College Opportunity.** “AB 1705 builds upon the success of student-centered remedial education reform policy that has already been transformational, with thousands more students enrolling and succeeding in transfer-level courses, particularly for Black and Latinx students. AB 1705 is California’s opportunity to ensure that Black and Latinx students are no longer being disproportionately placed into remedial education courses that completely derail their college goals, making for a brighter future for students, communities, and our state.”

“California community college transfer programs provide an essential pathway to economic opportunity for students who face financial barriers to enrolling at four-year schools,” **said George Ashford, Director of Collegiate Policy with GENup.** “As students ourselves, we at GENup are all-too familiar with how immense those financial barriers can be. In helping more students enroll in transfer-level classes, AB 1705 is a necessary step in creating an education system that is more equitable and accessible to all students.”

See [here](#) for a letter of support from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office.

See [here](#) for a letter from the many student groups and organizations who support AB 1705.

See [here](#) for a letter from over 90 community college faculty, administrators, staff, and researchers who support AB 1705.

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