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April 28, 2017

The Honorable Ricardo Lara
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, California 95814

**RE: SB 68 (Lara) – SUPPORT AS AMENDED, MARCH 29,
2017**

Dear Senator Lara:

Public Advocates supports SB 68 (Lara), as amended March 29, 2017, your proposal to expand eligibility for exemption from nonresident tuition from the California State University and the California Community Colleges to students who have completed three or more years of attendance or equivalent earned credits at a California elementary school, secondary school, adult school and/or California Community College.

Public Advocates is a civil rights legal organization that has served as a key voice for educational equity in landmark cases such as *Serrano v. Priest* and *Williams v. California*. We work to reverse inequities and ensure meaningful access to opportunity for students most affected by systemic injustices. Our commitment to “making rights real” has shaped our vision of building an educational system that prepares all students for college and career readiness, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, place of residency, language, or immigration status.

The passage of AB 540 (Firebaugh) in 2001 represented a significant step towards expanding access to education for all students in California by providing undocumented immigrant students who graduated from and spent a minimum of three years in a California high school a waiver from paying out-of-state tuition. Despite this, many undocumented students continue to face barriers in their path towards higher education, especially if they do not follow the traditional path straight out of high school to college. Consequently, these students are unable to access the benefits of AB 540. Especially in the current dangerous anti-immigrant political climate, it is critical that we continue protecting our undocumented students and safeguard their right to equitable opportunities for education.

SB 68 would provide an important remedy by expanding eligibility under AB 540 to students who have completed a minimum of three years at a state elementary school or secondary school and graduate from a California high school or attain an equivalent degree. This bill has estimated low fiscal impacts and is a significant step towards improving access to higher education for all California's students. Increased access to higher education will benefit these students, their communities, and the state's economy.

For these reasons, we support your bill SB 68 and appreciate your leadership in supporting immigrant students. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Liz Guillen".

Liz Guillen
Director of Legislative & Community Affairs
(916) 803-5596 – cell

Cc: Senate Appropriations Committee

