



## Skills for CA Policy Update

End of Session Wrap-Up - October 2021

Throughout the 2021 legislative year, the Skills for CA team has been working hard to elevate our Network's [policy priorities](#) at the State Capitol. Specifically, the Network has focused on various legislative and budget efforts centered on the needs of workers of color, securing a social safety net for working families, and working with our industry partners to stabilize and strengthen California's workforce.

As the Governor's deadline to take action on pending legislation came to a close on October 10th, we are excited to see several priority bills chaptered into law! The Governor signed critical measures that the Network has been supportive of throughout the year in the areas of broadband access, expansion of skills training opportunities, and support services for dislocated workers. In addition to legislation, the Network also advocated in support of various budget items that were approved this session, such as investments in student financial aid, career technical education, apprenticeship programs, and social safety net services. Many of the [Skills for CA Summit Action Agenda](#) items that we advocated for during the legislative office visits in June are being funded in this year's [state budget](#).

Below is a list of our priority bills and budget items that were accomplished this legislative session.

### Priority Legislation

- ❖ **[AB 628 \(E. Garcia\) Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative](#):** This bill would build upon the Breaking Barriers to Employment legislation (2017) by assisting individuals who face systemic barriers to employment in obtaining the skills necessary to prepare for work in high-demand industries. The bill also expands access and eligibility for community-based organizations to offer training and supportive services. The enacted budget provides a one-time \$30 billion dollar investment for the current program.  
**Status:** Chaptered
- ❖ **[SB 4 \(Gonzalez\) Broadband For All](#):** Would secure ongoing funding and implement a number of critically needed reforms to the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) program administered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). These changes will help close the digital divide and meet the connectivity needs of Californians, while also providing digital skill-building so adult learners & workers have the tools to advance in today's workforce. The enacted budget also provides a \$6 billion dollar investment for broadband infrastructure and access, complementing this bill.  
**Status:** Chaptered

- ❖ **[AB 1456 \(Medina/McCarty\) Cal Grant Reform](#)**: This bill would have addressed long-standing structural inequities within the student financial aid Cal Grant program. The Cal Grant Reform Act would have revised provisions of the existing Cal Grant programs and the Middle-Class Scholarship Program into a new Cal Grant Program, removing barriers to access financial aid, considering the total cost of attendance in award amounts, and based on student need.  
**Status:** Vetoes by the Governor. Full veto message [here](#).
  
- ❖ **[SB 609 \(Hurtado\) CalFresh Access](#)**: This bill will provide eligibility to the CalFresh program by including individuals participating in adult education and career tech education programs.  
**Status:** Chaptered

## Budget Accomplishments

As mentioned, the Network advocated in support of various budget items in this year's session. To achieve our goals, a [budget letter](#) was submitted to the Governor and Legislature advocating for investments in the areas of career technical education, apprenticeship programs, social safety net services, skills training, and broadband for all. We are excited to report that many of these items were included in the final budget agreement! Below you will find the Network's budget wins that were accomplished in the 2021-22 budget cycle.

- ❖ **\$155 million** to eliminate the age and time out of high school eligibility requirements for the Cal Grant entitlement program for community college students and adult learners. This new funding in student financial aid will be ongoing and will grow to \$332 million by 2025.
  
- ❖ **\$5.8 million** ongoing to further support Dreamer Resource Liaisons and support services for immigrant students, including undocumented students attending community colleges.
  
- ❖ **\$42 million** ongoing to expand funding for the Community College Strong Workforce Program, which provides career technical education programs and regional workforce planning.
  
- ❖ **\$100 million** one-time to provide additional opportunities in High Road Training Partnerships - bringing in a total of \$115 million. These training partnerships up-skill the current workforce while creating pathways for new hires and prioritizing workers from underserved communities.
  
- ❖ **\$30 million** one-time for the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative, which assists individuals who face systemic barriers to employment in obtaining the skills necessary to prepare for work in high-demand industries. Complementing this investment, [AB 628](#) (E.Garcia) was signed by the Governor, which is sponsored by Skills for CA Network Members - PolicyLink, California Workforce Association, and the California Immigrant Policy Center.

- ❖ **\$50 million** one-time for the Employment Training Panel to support training opportunities for new and incumbent workers and address skills gaps in underserved regions of the state.
- ❖ The **Food for All** initiative, approved in the budget, lays the groundwork to expand the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) in order to provide state-funded nutrition benefits to those ineligible for CalFresh or CFAP due to immigration status. \$5 million is included to expand CFAP in 2021-22, \$25 million in 2022-23, \$280 million in 2023-24, and \$280 million ongoing in 2024-25. Additionally, the budget provides close to \$300 million one-time to support food banks across the state.
- ❖ **Rent & Utilities Relief:** [AB 832](#) (Chiu) was signed in late June, extending the rent moratorium until September 30, 2021, and expanding the Rent Relief Program to provide up to 100 percent in assistance for rental and utility payments. AB 832 will allow the state to maximize the \$5.2 billion federal funds for rent, utilities, and housing-related expenses in order to assist Californians hit hardest by the pandemic.
- ❖ **\$100 million** one-time (over 3 years) to address community college students' basic needs such as food, child care, and housing insecurity. Also provides \$30 million ongoing for colleges to establish basic needs centers and hire basic needs coordinators, and \$30 million ongoing to support student mental health services.
- ❖ Increased **child care access** by 200,000 slots – 120,000 in 2021-22 and phasing in an additional 80,000 over the next 4 years – in the following programs: Alternative Payment, General Child Care, Migrant Child Care, bridge program for foster children, and prioritizes ongoing vouchers for essential workers currently receiving short-term child care.
- ❖ **\$6 billion** to expand broadband infrastructure and enhance internet access for unserved and underserved communities across the state. The broadband package also includes grant funding for digital literacy training programs for low-income communities facing socioeconomic barriers to broadband adoption. [SB 4](#) (Gonzalez) and [AB 14](#) (Aguiar-Curry) add additional provisions to address the digital divide. These bills were also chaptered into law.
- ❖ **\$18 million** investment to establish for the first time in California, a statewide longitudinal data system – integrating K-12, higher education, social services, financial aid, workforce training, and employment data in a secure system – fully leveraging quality data to improve outcomes for all students and adult learners from “cradle to career.” Currently, the governing board is being established and the implementation process will begin Fall 2021. Stay engaged by signing up for alerts [here](#).

For more information on the enacted state budget, please see the CA EDGE Coalition's budget overview [here](#).

For any other questions related to the bills and budget, please contact Anna Alvarado, Policy Director at CA EDGE Coalition, [aalvarado@caedge.org](mailto:aalvarado@caedge.org)