



Chief Student Services Officers Association



January 6, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol, 1st Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the undersigned representatives of the California Community Colleges, thank you for the support that your Administration has extended to the California Community Colleges, particularly in the area of expanding mental health services for the 2.1 million students we serve. We greatly appreciate the one-time funding from the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) provided by the Legislature recent budgets. We also recognize that this funding has not meet the demand for mental health services across our system. Sufficient and ongoing funding from Proposition 63 would greatly assist our colleges in developing comprehensive plans to provide mental health services which support our students and ensure successful completion of their educational goals. Consistent with the Board of Governors 2020-21 Budget and Legislative Request, we encourage you to include \$10 million in ongoing Proposition 63 funding for mental health services for community colleges in your January budget proposal.

According to the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment survey of California Community Colleges, conducted in the spring of 2019, over 60 percent of students reported that anxiety, depression, and stress had a "negative impact on individual academic performance". Even higher proportions of students report serious symptoms of mental health conditions: 37 percent experienced feeling "so depressed it is difficult to function" in the last 12 months, and 53 percent reported feeling "overwhelming anxiety" within the same period. Even more alarming, the data showed that, within the last 12 months, 11 percent of survey respondents seriously considered suicide, and 2.5 percent made an actual suicide attempt.

For many young adults enrolling in the California Community Colleges, the campus represents their best, and perhaps only, access point for mental health services. However, there is no direct funding mechanism for mental health care at California Community Colleges. In the absence of sufficient and ongoing funding, many colleges have pieced together mental health service budgets from various revenue sources. This often results in limited and inconsistent care, limited outreach, long waitlists, and high student-to-staff ratios. This means that

vulnerable students, including the vast majority of California's low-income and students of color who are enrolled in the community colleges, have less access to essential services.

Recognizing the mental health needs of community college students, in 2011 the Chancellor's Office and the Foundation for California Community Colleges collaborated to obtain a one-time grant from Proposition 63 of \$10 million, which was used to fund prevention and intervention strategies and support collaboration with behavioral health departments. In 2017, SB 85 appropriated \$4.5 million in one-time funding which ultimately funded 27 colleges in 15 districts to expand mental health services and provide training to staff and students. In 2018, AB 1809 provided \$10 million in one-time funding to support the objectives outlined in SB 85 and small one-time grants were provided to 114 community colleges.

The 2019-20 Budget Act provided \$7 million, one-time, from Proposition 63 for California Community Colleges to improve access to mental health services and early identification and intervention programs. Having more licensed providers on colleges will increase access and improve the capacity of the college to respond to crises as well as provide preventative care for students. Additionally, training and development opportunities will improve the quality of care and allow expansion into the entire campus community. Examples of such initiatives include suicide prevention trainings, the creation of peer education programs, and education that focuses on how best to provide services to our most vulnerable students including the LGBTQ community, foster youth, undocumented students, veterans, and students with a history of trauma.

While these one-time funds have been beneficial in supporting mental health services at California Community Colleges, challenges remain with the ability to hire staff and continue to provide a consistent level of service without the guarantee of ongoing funding. These one-time investments have served as a stopgap solution for some districts; but have been insufficient to support the system. In 2019, the Chancellor's Office received 43 applications from districts representing 72 colleges. Funds were ultimately able to support only 16 districts representing 27 colleges.

In September, the Board of Governors requested the 2020-21 Budget Act provide \$10 million in ongoing funding from the statewide administrative portion of Proposition 63 to expand and make permanent clinical mental health services and provide training and professional development to mental health care providers at California Community Colleges. This funding will allow more colleges to serve higher numbers of students and build more sustainable, long-term programs for their communities. We strongly encourage you to include this request in your 2020-21 budget proposal.

Sincerely,



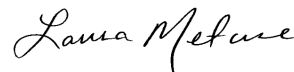
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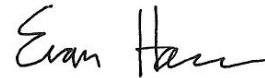
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