



AB 1271: REHABILITATION THROUGH EDUCATION

SUMMARY

AB 1271 would help improve rehabilitation of prison inmates through education by incentivizing community colleges to provide credit and non-credit courses, career development and college preparatory courses in correctional institutions. The bill would allow community colleges to receive state funding for provision of these courses. Funding for these programs would be conditional on attendance by inmates.

ISSUE

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) uses returns to prison as its primary indicator of recidivism, defining a “recidivist” as an “individual convicted of a felony in a CDCR adult institution who was release to parole, discharged after being paroled, or directly discharged from CDCR during a defined time period and subsequently returned to prison during a specified follow-up period”. California has one of the highest rates of adult recidivism in the country. Data from the 2012 Annual Report from the CDCR demonstrates that 47.4% of paroled felons return to prison within one year of release. Without continued support from the state for rehabilitation efforts, these rates are likely to increase, thereby putting the public’s safety at risk and costing the state millions for their repeated incarceration.

BACKGROUND

The Federal Bureau of Prisons states that recidivism rates are inversely proportional to educational program participation while in prison; the more educational courses completed by individuals for each 6 months confined, the lower the recidivism rates of the group. Additional work done by the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research suggests that recidivism may be reduced by 10-20% with the use of educational programs at correctional facilities.

Existing law authorizes the governing board of a California Community College District that provides classes for inmates of certain facilities, including a federal correctional facility, to include units of full-time equivalent

students generated in those classes for purposes of state apportionment. However these courses are only funded at non-credit rates, and funding is not allowed at all for these courses at state correctional facilities. AB 1271 would allow community colleges to receive appropriate funding from the state for these courses, and allow funding in state correctional institutions. This funding would create an incentive for community colleges to provide these courses to incarcerated individuals, and also encourage them to help prisoners finish courses towards a degree or training for a vocational program.

BENEFITS OF AB 1271

- The bill allows attendance hours generated by credit courses at all correctional facilities to be funded at the appropriate rate, rather than the lower, non-credit rate.
- AB 1271 waives the “open course” provision, conforming to current allowances for such courses offered in local or federal correctional facilities.
- The bill also prohibits districts from claiming state apportionments for instruction in correctional facilities if the district is fully compensated by another entity for the costs of direct instructional services.
- The bill requires districts to deduct any partial compensation for correctional facility education from their apportionment.

SUPPORT

AFSCME
California School Employees Association
California State Conference of the NAACP
Community College League of California
Kern Community College District
Los Angeles Community College District
Los Rios Community College District
Oakland Tech High School
Peralta Community College District
Rio Hondo Community College District
West Kern Community College District
Yuba Community College District

OPPOSITION

None on file

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