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Assembly Members Santiago, Mike Fong and Education Leaders Rally for the Debt Free College Plan

(Los Angeles, CA) – Today, Assembly Member Santiago (D-Los Angeles), Assembly Member Mike Fong (D-Alhambra) and education leaders in Los Angeles hosted a rally to urge the Legislature and Governor to pass the Legislature’s Debt Free College Plan. The Debt Free College Plan includes; 1) \$25 million to expand free community college to all full-time students, 2) over \$500 million for Cal Grant reform, which will provide 150,000 new students with Cal Grants, and 3) historic investments in the Middle Class Scholarship.

[Watch rally footage here:](#)



“The Legislature’s debt free college plan furthers California’s commitment to a higher education that’s affordable for all Californians,” said **Assembly Member Miguel Santiago (D-Los Angeles)**. “The current higher education system leaves students with tens of thousands of dollars in debt. In California, we’re changing that. In 2017, AB 2 (Santiago) provided free community college (CC) to first-time, full-time California students. This year, AB 2266 (Santiago) will expand free CC to all full-time students. We are also working on Cal Grant reform and debt free education at CSUs and UCs. We will continue to work toward completely debt free higher education in California!”

“Debt-Free college should be the standard in California, and we're on our way,” said **Assembly Member Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento)**. “California has always led on college access and affordability, and we can do it again with the first in the nation Debt-Free College plan—a game changer for California families.

“As a former trustee of the Los Angeles Community College District, I am proud of the Legislature’s budget that provides millions of dollars to help our students access and complete higher education debt free,” said **Assembly Member Mike Fong (D-Alhambra)**. “Costs to attend college is more than just tuition. We need to continue to advocate and provide funding for transportation, books, basic needs, and housing in embracing the hopes and aspirations of our students in their pursuit of higher education. This budget reflects the Legislature’s commitment to helping students succeed.”

“The LACCD College Promise Program has experienced unparalleled success, with higher overall rates of completion and persistence among mostly first-generation students,” said Chancellor Francisco C. Rodriguez, Ph.D. “This bill expands much-needed access to higher education, keeps college affordable for working families, and accelerates the journey to a no-cost Associates degree for all full-time students, keeping California globally competitive in an inclusive economy.”

“Equity has always been at the forefront of LACCD, and expanding College Promise to returning students is an important step in bolstering that,” said LACCD Board of Trustees Member & Second Vice President Nichelle Henderson. “We have seen the dramatic impact College Promise has had on first-time students, with significant increases in their completion rates. Giving this same opportunity to returning students is the right thing to do.”

“Our economy works best when it includes everyone,” said LACCD Board of Trustees Member & Immediate Past President Steve Veres. “The College Promise program has been a pioneer in helping underserved students access college where many have secured high-paying jobs. Expanding it to cover returning students as well will only strengthen our workforce for years to come.”

Assembly Members Santiago and Mike Fong, in partnership with LACCD and other education leaders such as Assemblymember Kevin McCarty, are celebrating the Legislature's Debt Free College Plan and urging their legislative colleagues and Governor Newsom to pass the proposal. This plan consists of; 1) \$25 million to expand the College Promise program to all full-time students; 2) an historic investment in the Middle Class Scholarship; and 3) over \$500 million to reform the Cal Grant and provide an additional 150,000 students with Cal Grant awards. The Debt Free College Plan furthers California's goal of providing truly debt free education to all California students by removing barriers such as GPA and time-out-of-college requirements.

The Legislature is expected to vote on the State Budget, which includes the Debt Free College Plan, on Monday, June 13 and the Governor must sign the Budget by June 15.

Assembly Member Miguel Santiago is the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Governmental Organization and Chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Los Angeles County Homelessness. He also sits on the Assembly Committees on Public Safety, Health, Higher Education and Utilities and Energy. He represents the 53rd District composed of the cities of Los Angeles, Huntington Park, and Vernon.

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