

2026 POLICY AGENDA

BLACK
STUDENT
SUCCESS
WEEK

Black Student Success Week (BSSW) began in 2020 as a call to action. It was a moment to center the voices, needs, and futures of Black and African American students across California's higher education landscape. What started as a focused advocacy effort has grown into a statewide movement, bringing together students, educators, advocates, and policymakers to advance bold, equity-driven solutions. As federal rollbacks threaten the progress our communities have fought for, California has both the opportunity and the responsibility to lead. **This 2026 agenda reflects our collective commitment to policies that protect, support, and invest in Black student success now more than ever.**

PRIORITY 1: RESPONDING TO FEDERAL LANDSCAPE CHANGES

In light of the changing federal funding landscape for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), California has an obligation to protect its most vulnerable student populations, particularly low-income students of color. In 2024, California legislators passed SB 1348, introduced by former State Senator Steven Bradford, which established the California Black Serving Institution (BSI) Designation for institutions of higher education that excel in serving their Black student population.

Thanks to the leadership of former State Senator Bradford and higher education leaders, SB 1348 (Bradford) laid the groundwork for California to recognize higher education institutions that are truly serving students, including but not limited to Black and African American students. Thirty-one schools received the distinction, underscoring the importance of BSI designations in showcasing the presence and success of Black and African American students in higher education and opening the door for campuses to receive additional support. MSI funding enables schools to access additional resources that benefit their entire student population by investing in classroom support, research grants, and other institutional partnerships.

SB 1255 by Senator Eloise Reyes: California Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Designation | AB 2374 by Assemblymember Mike Fong: California Asian American - and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) Designation

Modeled after the BSI bill passed in 2024, these proposals would establish state-level designations and support structures for Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs). For Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Latinx students, a designation could signal during the college search process that certain institutions in the state are welcoming and have an explicit commitment to supporting them in myriad ways to reach their academic goals, thus prompting them to apply.

For institutions, the designation provides an opportunity to convey their commitment to Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Latinx students, develop and execute their Student Success plan, and ideally, in the future, serve as a mechanism for identifying institutions eligible for targeted financial support from the state and/or federal government. The state would benefit from enhancing California colleges and universities' capacity to support the success of Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Latinx students and to increase attainment rates. Together, these efforts help build a more equitable ecosystem of institutional investment across California.





ACA 7 by Assemblymember Corey Jackson: Restoring Race-Conscious Policy in Public Education

ACA 7 proposes a constitutional amendment to exclude public education from Proposition 209's ban on race-conscious policymaking in education in California. If approved by voters in November 2026, it would allow state and local leaders to directly address racial disparities in TK-12 and higher education through targeted, equity-driven policies, while maintaining existing restrictions in higher education admissions, public employment, and contracting.

Although ACA 7 will not change higher education admissions practices, it will allow various educational agencies such as schools, county offices of education, and colleges, to provide direct and crucial support to students of color to improve their educational outcomes, as there is no effective policy to address racial disparities.

AB 2114 by Assemblymember Isaac Bryan: Educational Asylum Program

This is an African American Male Education Network and Development (A²MEND) sponsored bill that would authorize a participating public postsecondary educational institution to administer an educational asylum program, in collaboration with the State Department of Education, the Regents of the University of California, the Trustees of the California State University, and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. Beginning in the 2027-2028 year, the bill would exempt a transfer student who is granted educational asylum status from paying nonresident tuition at a participating institution and would require the transfer student to only pay resident tuition and fees.

PRIORITY 2: DISMANTLING BARRIERS TO COLLEGE ACCESS

Resources for Black students need to be available, accessible, and responsive to the tumultuous higher education landscape. The following bills will strengthen the existing institutional supports that have proven effective over the years in increasing the number of Black students who achieve their academic aspirations and sustain long-term economic mobility. From ensuring students can access the rigorous coursework they need to succeed in college to providing them with adequate funding to support themselves, these bills provide Black students with the support they deserve.

AB 1871 by Assemblymember Mike Fong: CCAP & Dual Enrollment Access

AB 1871 strengthens California College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) partnerships. It expands dual-enrollment opportunities for high school students, an evidence-based strategy to increase Black students' access to higher education and long-term economic mobility. Only 37% of high schools serving a majority of Black and Latinx students offer dual enrollment. CCAP implementation challenges limit student access and create unnecessary barriers, including burdensome application requirements, limited data on dual enrollment outcomes, and course limits that restrict participation. AB 1871 addresses these issues by streamlining the application process, removing the requirement for principal approval, improving data reporting to evaluate student outcomes better, and eliminating current course term limits. These reforms will help expand participation for Black students, increase college completion, and advance educational equity.

SB 1006 by Senator Stephen Padilla: Cal Grant B Access Award Modernization

SB 1006 modernizes the Cal Grant B access award, which currently stands at \$1,648 annually, less than one-fifth of its original 1969 value when adjusted for inflation. It also includes supplemental access awards of up to \$6,000 annually for student parents and former foster youth. Cal Grants are the most critical state financial aid investments to promote college access and affordability for Black students and students from low-income backgrounds throughout California. With approximately 69% of Cal Grant recipients relying on Cal Grant B—and 38% attending community colleges—this proposal represents a direct investment in Black student success.

PRIORITY 3: STRENGTHENING STATE FUNDING INVESTMENTS

Investments in Black student success are investments in California's workforce and economy. Advancing Black student success requires sustained, equity-driven investments that strengthen the supports proven to improve access, retention, and completion. We call for strategic funding to expand culturally responsive programs, stabilize essential wraparound services, and strengthen institutions serving large numbers of Black and African American learners at California Community Colleges. These proposals collectively reinforce a statewide commitment to closing racial equity gaps and ensuring Black students have the tools, environments, and opportunities they need to thrive.

\$100M Block Grant for Student Supports

We support the State Budget proposal to invest \$100 million in a community college student supports block grant, providing flexible funding for wraparound services, including mental health, basic needs, childcare, and academic support, that Black students disproportionately rely on for persistence and completion.

The African American Male Education Network and Development (A²MEND) Budget Investment

We support the A²MEND request of a \$5 million increase in the ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund for A²MEND and the removal of the participation cap to scale the program and satisfy systemwide demand equitably. A²MEND is a critical statewide program that works to close persistent racial equity gaps by providing culturally responsive mentorship, academic support, and leadership development for African American male students in California's community colleges. We support A²MEND's leadership in advancing this critical equity lever for Black students.

Black Serving Institutions Funding

We support trailer bill language to establish the Designation of California Black-Serving Institutions Grant Program for California Black-Serving Institutions, and provide \$25 million dollars in funding in the 2026-2027 California State Budget. The Designation of California Black-Serving Institutions Grant Program would be a competitive grant program to develop and implement new, or expand existing, academic resources and student support services for underserved students, including, but not limited to, Black and African American students. The trailer bill language would require the Black-Serving Institutions governing board to approve or deny grant applications.

The trailer bill language would designate the California State University Statewide Central Office for the Advancement of Black Excellence as the managing entity for the grant program and would require it to act as a neutral administrative body tasked with, among other duties, developing the grant application form and a process for grant applicants to apply for grants, and processing and presenting grant applications to the governing board, as specified. The trailer bill language would require the managing entity to submit an annual report to the Department of Finance, the Governor, and the Legislature on the grant program, as specified.

Student Equity and Achievement (SEA) Program

We support the California Community Colleges' request for an additional \$62.3 million in Proposition 98 General Fund for the SEA Program, an innovative initiative aimed at removing inequities in college access, retention, and completion via wraparound services for California students.

