

September 1, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 1705 (Irwin)—Request for Signature**

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of UnidosUS (formerly the National Council of La Raza), I write to urge you to sign Assembly Bill 1705, which will ensure that all students succeed in California's community colleges. AB 1705 will ensure that students can enroll directly into the courses that will give them the greatest chance to meet their college goals. This bill provides additional clarity to campuses as they continue to implement the transformational reforms spurred by the evidence-based policy of AB 705 (Chapter 745, Statutes of 2017)—which requires California's community colleges to recognize high school schoolwork instead of relying on inaccurate and inequitable placement tests—and places students into English and math courses with appropriate support so that students have the greatest chance to make progress toward their college degree. AB 1705 ensures that all students receive the benefits of AB 705 and that students of color are not left behind.

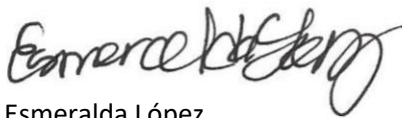
UnidosUS is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization and has built a stronger country by creating opportunities for Latinos for more than 50 years. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers at the national and local levels. The UnidosUS California-based Affiliates include 63 community-based organizations that invest more than \$1.8 billion and employ more than 15,000 staff to provide direct services to approximately 1.8 million Californians annually. UnidosUS is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has an office in Los Angeles and staff in Sacramento. Through partnerships, community investments, and state research and advocacy on housing, health, and education, UnidosUS advances opportunities for the more than 15 million Latinos who call California home.

The majority (72%) of Latino college students enroll at a community college.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the successful implementation of AB 705 has the potential to significantly impact Latino students' college completion rates. AB 705 has already resulted in substantial impacts for California community college (CCC) students—completion of transfer-level courses has risen by roughly 20 to 25 percentage points for all racial/ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> AB 705 enabled tens of thousands of additional students to enter and successfully complete transfer-level courses instead of below-transfer, remedial courses.<sup>3</sup> After implementation, access to transfer-level English became nearly universal, and completion rates for Latinos increased from 20% in 2015 to 56% in 2019.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, there was an increase from 22% to 80% of students who enrolled directly into introductory, transfer-level math—the rate of those who passed increased from 15% to 46%. There was a similar pattern for Latino and Black students in the completion of transfer-level math—completion rates for Latino students went from 9% in fall 2015 to 39% in fall 2020.<sup>5</sup>

AB 705 has reduced racial equity gaps in access to, and completion of, transfer-level courses. Yet, implementation of AB 705 has been uneven: a substantial number of students are still required or directed to enroll in below-transfer-level courses, diminishing their chances of completing transfer-level courses.<sup>6</sup> At one in five community colleges, a third or more of students are enrolled in remedial courses: disproportionately Latino and Black. When access to transfer-level courses is restricted or discouraged, Blacks and Latinos are the ones left behind, with lower completion rates of transfer-level courses compared to Asians and Whites.<sup>7</sup>

Equitable access and placement to transfer-level courses are critical for students' community college completion. AB 705 has already resulted in significant gains for our most vulnerable students, including Latinos. Yet, AB 1705 is necessary to address the racial and ethnic inequities still present in California's community college system. For these reasons we support AB 1705 and respectfully request your signature when the bill comes before you. If you have any questions regarding our support, please contact Viviana Martin, Policy Strategist, Policy and Advocacy at [vmartin@unidosus.org](mailto:vmartin@unidosus.org).

Sincerely,



Esmeralda López  
California State Director  
UnidosUS

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<sup>1</sup> Vikash Reddy, PhD and Michele Siqueiros, *California Colleges and Universities: The State of Higher Education for Latinx Californians* (Los Angeles: The Campaign for College Opportunity, November 2021), 53, <https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/FINAL-SHE-Latinx-web.pdf> (accessed August 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Marisol Cuellar Mejia, Olga Rodriguez, and Hans Johnson, *A New Era of Student Access at California's Community Colleges* (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, November 2020), 3, <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/a-new-era-of-student-access-at-californias-community-colleges-november-2020.pdf> (accessed August 15, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> California Community Colleges, "Statewide or College View: Statewide," Transfer Level Gateway Completion Dashboard, <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/transfer-level-dashboard> (accessed August 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Marisol Cuellar Mejia, Olga Rodriguez, and Hans Johnson, *A New Era of Student Access*.

<sup>5</sup> Marisol Cuellar Mejia et al., *Community College Math in California's New Era of Student Access* (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, December 2021), <https://www.ppic.org/publication/community-college-math-in-californias-new-era-of-student-access/#:~:text=In%20fall%202019%2C%20almost%20all,more%20than%20tripled%20in%20math> (accessed August 14, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Marisol Cuellar Mejia, Olga Rodriguez, and Hans Johnson, *A New Era of Student Access*, 75–78.

<sup>7</sup> Marisol Cuellar Mejia et al., *Community College Math*.