August 4, 2023

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Room 7630
Sacramento, California 95814

Position: CONCERN

Dear Chair Portantino:

On behalf of the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellor’s Office, I respectfully write to express our concern on Assembly Bill 811, which would require new credit course repetition guidelines that are inconsistent with the Legislature’s and Administration’s goal of ensuring timely student completion.

Over the last few years, the legislature has enacted several historic policies that are intended to increase student success, close racial equity gaps, and improve transfer. While AB 811 aims to eliminate barriers to student success, we believe it is more effective to rely on existing policies and supports to help ensure that students are successful their first time taking a course. Our existing Title 5 regulations already allow for flexibility for students to repeat a course more than three times, if the student experiences an illness, family emergency, or other extenuating circumstances.

What’s more, AB 811 is a costly new mandate in a time of fiscal uncertainty. While AB 811 is a pilot program, it will result in hundreds of millions of new dollars in increased state apportionment costs, despite the small fraction of students who will be eligible to repeat for their fourth and fifth attempts. This is not the time to implement new costly measures, especially those that compromise our ability to faithfully implement current policies. Instead of enacting new policy changes to course repeatability, we urge your continued support for the following programs and services that are proven to close equity gaps, improve educational outcomes, and reduce student time and units to a degree:

- **Equitable Placement and Completion**: AB 705 (Irwin, 2017) and AB 1705 (Irwin, 2022) transformed remedial education in the CCC system by changes course placement policies. While we have a long way to go, early data is very promising. During the first year of mandatory implementation (2019-2020), every group examined achieved large enrollment and completion gains in both English and math in one year, including African American and Latinx students, low-income students, students with disabilities, foster youth, and veterans.

- **Academic Supports**: AB 1705 requires colleges to provide students who need or desire extra academic support with access to tutoring, concurrent courses, or other academic services. Corequisite supports are one of the most effective ways of supporting students and promoting their success in college coursework. The 2022 Budget Act included $64 million one-time to support colleges in designing, implementing, and improving corequisite models. Before enacting new policies on course taking patterns, we need more time to evaluate how corequisite supports are helping students succeed in their courses. Additionally, AB 1187 (Irwin, 2022) authorized state apportionment for supervised tutoring if it is provided to students enrolled within transfer-level English and math courses.
Retention and Enrollment Outreach: In response to the severe enrollment declines resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Early Action Package and subsequent budget investments provided over $300 million for colleges to conduct targeted outreach and communication campaigns to encourage reenrollment. Colleges have utilized this funding to adopt innovative and cost-effective enrollment strategies. Enrollment numbers across our system are beginning to stabilize, with a 2.4% increase in Fall 2022 headcount.

Guided Pathways: Under the Guided Pathways framework, colleges are rethinking and redesigning programs and services into cohesive, campus-wide strategies that support student enrollment, persistence, and completion. The 2017 Budget Act provided $150 million and the 2022 Budget Act included an additional $50 million for colleges to identify friction points in a students’ journey and restructure course offerings, support services, and academic pathways with the students’ experience at the forefront.

These investments are the top priority of our community college system. Unfortunately, AB 811 has the potential to undo years of transformational work to be student-centered. Our Vision 2030 framework calls on our system to advance student success, access, support, and socio-economic mobility with equity. We ask for your consideration in remaining steadfast in supporting existing student-centered policies. Thank you for your time and consideration of these concerns with AB 811. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Vice Chancellor of Government Relations David O’Brien at (916) 323-5951 or at dobrien@cccco.edu.

Sincerely,

David O’Brien
Vice Chancellor of Government Relations

c: The Honorable Mike Fong, California State Assembly
   Lenin Del Castillo, Principal Consultant, Senate Appropriations Committee