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CA STATE ASSEMBLYMEMBER | 80th DISTRICT

AB 664: Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Bachelor's Degrees Pilot

Summary:

As the world's fourth-largest economy, California is experiencing rapid economic change. However, persistent gaps in opportunity and economic mobility remain, highlighting the need for a multifaceted solution to prepare students for high-paying careers. Within this dynamic environment, Chula Vista plays a vital role as a hub for cross-border business, education services, forensic fields, and a growing technology sector.

One significant step toward addressing these challenges is AB 664, which would authorize Southwestern College (SWC) to offer a limited number of region-specific, workforce-aligned baccalaureate degrees. These degrees are designed to fill workforce gaps that existing public universities do not address, positioning Chula Vista to help the State meet its rapidly evolving workforce needs.

Background:

Despite being the largest city in California with more than 200,000 residents, Chula Vista lacks a public university offering baccalaureate degrees. This creates a significant access barrier for the 585,000 residents served by the Southwestern Community College District (SWC), which remains the region's only public postsecondary institution.

To address this gap, SWC has partnered with UC San Diego, San Diego State University (SDSU), CSU San Marcos, the City of Chula Vista, and South County's K-12 system over the past several years. Together, they have worked to expand local bachelor's degree opportunities through intersegmental partnerships and the City's developing University & Innovation District.

Problem:

Labor-market analyses from the San Diego Regional Policy and Innovation Center and the University Now Initiative identified 147 priority occupations that require bachelor's degrees and remain underserved by regional UC/CSU offerings. Limited program availability at regional public universities, many of which are impacted, creates barriers for place-bound, working, and transit-dependent students, particularly those in the binational U.S.-Mexico border region.

Solution:

AB 664 seeks to optimize an important tool in the State's toolbox by taking a regionally focused approach. It caters specifically to the unique workforce conditions of the South Bay Region and requires structured collaboration among SWC, UCSD, SDSU, and CSUSM.

AB 664 authorizes bachelor's degree programs not currently offered in high-demand workforce fields as part of this broader strategy.

Through this bill, Southwestern College would develop bachelor's degree programs in Allied Health Education and Leadership, Applied Forensic Science, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and Interaction Design. This ensures that Chula Vista continues to be a major contributor to California's strong economy.

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Support:

Southwestern Community College (sponsor)
Southwestern College Academic Senate
Southwestern College Association of Student
Organizations
COLEGAS - California Community Colleges
Organización de Latinx
San Diego Community College District

