



March 2024

Honorable Al Muratsuchi
Chair, Assembly Education Committee
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 333 - California Success, Opportunity, and Academic Resilience (CalSOAR) Guaranteed Income Program - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Muratsuchi,

The undersigned **41** organizations write to you in strong support of SB 333 (Cortese), as revised on June 7, 2023, which would create the California SOAR (Success, Opportunity, & Academic Resilience) Guaranteed Income Program. The bill would provide a crucial lifeline to 12th grade students experiencing homelessness for their transition out of high school and into employment or postsecondary education.

According to Census Data (DataQuest), there were approximately 15,000 students experiencing homelessness who were enrolled in the 12th grade in California during the 2020-21 academic year. Current federal law, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, defines “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act supports the enrollment and education of students experiencing homelessness. California school districts utilize McKinney-Vento funds, among other federal funds such as those from the American Rescue Plan Act, to provide educational support for K-12 students experiencing homelessness. However, these supports cease once a student graduates. There are no dedicated, ongoing state funds designated to assist these students during the summer months following high school graduation, a time when they are exiting a robust support system and attempting to navigate adulthood with limited resources.

Experts who work with students experiencing homelessness report that the majority aspire to attend post-secondary education. Moreover, data tells us that an overwhelming majority of youth (over 90%) experiencing homelessness wish to pursue careers that require some form of postsecondary education. In the end, about half (50%) of these students do enroll in college, a number that has grown over recent years thanks to various efforts by school districts, community-based organizations and advocacy groups. Still, the risk of derailed plans is extremely high without the means and support to make a successful transition from high school to college or employment. This phenomenon is so common, it even has a name: “summer melt.”

In recognition of the need to support youth experiencing homelessness during the bridge between high school graduation and post-secondary education or employment, SB 333 would establish a statewide guaranteed income pilot program that provides direct, unconditional cash payments to these youth for five months, starting in late spring through the summer. The bill defines an eligible participant as a 12th grade student who is homeless as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act. This program will be administered by the Department of Social Services in collaboration with identification data from the Department of Education. Additionally, the bill seeks to create protections from any impact on public assistance programs, student financial aid, and the California Earned Income Tax Credit. Lastly, the bill directs the department to evaluate the program that measures educational and economic security outcomes for award recipients.

Guaranteed income is proving to be a cost-effective policy solution to poverty and income inequality among marginalized communities. The Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) and the Santa Clara County Transition-Aged Youth Basic Income Pilot Program have both produced life-changing results for recipients. Moreover, recent research tells us that direct cash transfers, such as guaranteed income, can play a crucial role in helping youth to sustainably exit homelessness.

SB 333 would equip youth experiencing homelessness with the financial resources to enter onto a path towards stability. The no-strings-attached income model empowers youth to utilize the funds in a way that they feel is best for them, whether that be entering into stable employment or pursuing higher education.

For these reasons, the undersigned organizations support SB 333 and respectfully urge your “AYE” vote.

Sincerely,

Economic Security California Action, Teri Olle (Co-Sponsor)

Young Invincibles, Alfredo Camacho (Co-Sponsor)

Generation Up, Sue Oh (Co-Sponsor)

End Poverty in California (EPIC), Devon Gray (Co-Sponsor)

All Home, Brett Andrews

Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Empowerment, Maritza Maldonado

Building Skills Partnership, Sylvia Romo
California Women's Law Center, Betsy Butler
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc. (CCWRO), Kevan Insko
Collaborising, Lea Murray
Comment Studio, Loren Dalbert
Disability Rights California, Gregory Cramer
Education Justice Academy, Briana Kayla Mullen
Five Key, Steve Good
Food Recovery Network, Regina Anderson
Friends Committee on Legislation of California, Kevan Insko
GLIDE, Eleana Binder
Indivisible CA: STateStrong, Dennessa Atilas
John Burton Advocates for Youth, Debbie Raucher
LA Best Babies Network, Anna Ghukasyan
Lighthouse Silicon Valley, Quency Phillips
Lutheran Office of Public Policy-California, Regina Banks
McKinleyville Family Resource Center, Robin Baker
Miracle Messages, Kevin F. Adler
Mission Neighborhood Health Center, Mason Jeffrys
Monument Impact, Judith Ortiz
My New Red Shoes, Minh Ngo
National Council of Jewish Women Los Angeles, Nabila Dunbar
Orange County United Way, Michelle Murphy
Public Health Advocates, Oussama Mokeddem
Rising Communities, Michelle Burton, PhD
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank, Meg Davidson
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, Tracy Weatherby
Si Se Puede Collective (East San Jose, CA), Gabriel Hernandez
Stepping Forward LA, Beth Ryan
The Children's Partnership, Maddie Ribble
United Parents & Students,
United Way California Capital Region, Ejiro Okoro
United Ways of California
Universal Income Project
Western Center on Law and Poverty

CC: Members of the Committee