



YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Use Your Voice

MAY 25, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Senate Budget Chair
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Assembly Budget Chair
State Capitol, Room 3173
Sacramento, CA 98514

The Honorable John Laird
Senate Education Budget Chair
State Capitol, Room 8720
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
Assembly Higher Education Budget Chair
State Capitol, Room 4250
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: \$16 million for CSU and CCC Collaborative to serve Asian American, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander higher education students

DEAR SENATOR SKINNER, SENATOR LAIRD, ASSEMBLYMEMBER TING AND ASSEMBLYMEMBER MCCARTY,

I respectfully write in support of the \$16 million on-going budget request for the California State University (CSU) and California Community Colleges (CCC) Collaborative with \$8 million going to CSU and \$8 million going to CCC. This Collaborative will create a consortium for culturally responsive on-campus student support programs specifically for low-income, underserved, first-generation Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) students to increase higher education retention and attainment. This funding would prioritize CSU and CCC schools that are federally designated as minority serving institutions, which, by federal definition, require that "an institution must have at least 10% full-time AANHPI students, of which 50% must be low income according to Pell Grant requirements."

As an unapologetically anti-racist organization whose staff and youth participants are almost entirely Black, Indigenous and people of color, yli is witness to the profound impacts of inequities in our education system and



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beyond. We strongly support efforts to increase access to educational opportunities for youth of color who are most impacted by these inequities.

While California is home to the largest AANHPI community in the nation, 7,382,780, which is also the fastest growing racial group in California and in the United States at 35.5%,¹ there is a lack of state investment in addressing low education attainment of low-income and underserved AANHPI higher education students. The retention and graduation rates of AANHPI students show vast differences in the support necessary to help students meet higher education attainment goals to sustain a healthy workforce in California. While 53.9% of Asian Americans (25 years old and over) in California have a bachelor's degree or higher, disaggregated US Census data illustrates the education inequities underserved AANHPI communities face:

- Only 23.9% of Hmong Americans, 19.2% of Laotian Americans, 35.9% of Vietnamese Americans, and 29.1% of NHPI communities (25 years old and over) have a bachelor's degree or higher.²

In the past couple of years under COVID, our AANHPI, especially our NHPI communities, have been devastated. Many AANHPI students have left their academic pursuits for varying reasons – to take care of family members, find a job and help with family bills, and address mental health concerns related to the pandemic and anti-Asian sentiments. The AANHPI population is the fastest growing minority population in both the nation and California and one-third of the national population residing in California. We have an opportunity to directly address the critical needs of our underserved and underrepresented AANHPI student population to ensure all students have better access and complete their higher education attainment as they will make up the future of our workforce.

California has established a precedent in funding underserved and underrepresented students through renowned initiatives such as Puente Project and Umoja Community – model programs for improving access, retention, and attainment for Black, Latinx/Hispanic, and underserved

¹ US Census, 2020

² US Census, 2019



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student populations. California can make history by institutionalizing support specific to serving underserved and underrepresented AANHPI students.

With that, Youth Leadership Institute urges you to support the \$16 million ongoing for CSU and CCC Collaborative to serve Asian American, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islander higher education students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patty Barahona', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PATTY BARAHONA
CEO, Youth Leadership Institute