

## Senate Bill No. 890

### CHAPTER 472

An act to add and repeal Article 6.3 (commencing with Section 54710) of Chapter 9 of Part 29 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Education Code, relating to pupils.

[Approved by Governor September 28, 2008. Filed with  
Secretary of State September 28, 2008.]

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 890, Scott. Pupils: Early Commitment to College program.

Existing law requires a school district maintaining any of grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to offer to all otherwise qualified pupils in those grades a course of study fulfilling the requirements and prerequisites for admission to the California public institutions of postsecondary education and to provide a timely opportunity to each of those pupils to enroll within a 4-year period in each course necessary to fulfill those requirements and prerequisites.

Existing law authorizes a school district to apply to establish a University and College Opportunities Program with existing local or categorical funds. The program plan developed by a school district or school is required to include, among other things, college counseling to assist pupils in preparing application forms for college admission, to procure scholarships and other financial aid, and to meet all deadlines for these programs.

This bill would establish, until January 1, 2019, the Early Commitment to College program. Participation by pupils, school districts, colleges, and universities in the program would be voluntary. A pupil scheduled to graduate from high school after 2017 would not be allowed to participate. The Superintendent of Public Instruction would be required, among other program duties, to designate the 30% of public schools that maintain any of grades 6 to 9, inclusive, with the highest proportion of low-income pupils, as defined, as College Opportunity Zones. A school that is designated as a College Opportunity Zone by the Superintendent would be required to give all pupils enrolled in grades 6 to 9, inclusive, and their parents or guardians the opportunity to sign a "Save Me a Spot in College" pledge developed by the Superintendent. Schools not designated as a College Opportunity Zone would be required to give pupils who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals and are enrolled in grades 6 to 9, inclusive, and their parents or guardians the opportunity to sign a pledge. Participating school districts would be required to provide college information and college preparation events inclusive of pupils who sign the pledge.

The bill would provide that a pupil who signs a pledge declares a commitment to prepare for college, finish high school, and enroll in college and commits, among other things, to meet all graduation requirements, take

college preparatory coursework, complete and file a free application for federal student aid, and submit his or her grade point average to the Student Aid Commission by March 2 of his or her senior year. A pupil who signs the pledge and is certified by his or her school district as having fulfilled the requirements of the pledge would receive, upon enrollment at a community college, a fee waiver under the fee waiver program of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges for 2 or more years of enrollment at a California community college.

The bill would encourage the California Community Colleges, the University of California, the California State University, independent colleges and universities, the California Student Opportunity and Access Program, the Student Aid Commission, and other nonprofit, business, or other community organizations to provide support services as needed in coordination with school districts.

The bill would require the Superintendent to submit a recommendation to the Legislature, on or before November 1, 2017, on whether the program should be continued.

These provisions would be repealed on January 1, 2019.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a program to ensure early notification and early commitment of college opportunities for pupils in middle school and high school and their families. It is the intent of the Legislature that the program motivate pupils to stay in school, graduate from high school, take college preparatory coursework, and, if they choose to do so, seek postsecondary opportunities.

SEC. 2. Article 6.3 (commencing with Section 54710) is added to Chapter 9 of Part 29 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Education Code, to read:

#### Article 6.3. Early Commitment to College Program

54710. The Early Commitment to College program is hereby established for the purpose of accomplishing all of the following goals:

(a) Increase high school completion rates, direct college-going rates, and college preparation of pupils attending schools with the greatest poverty and among low-income pupils in general.

(b) Motivate pupils to prepare for college by taking college preparatory coursework, which may include career technical coursework and the course requirements for admission to the University of California and the California State University.

(c) Help families understand that college is attainable and affordable, that financial aid is available, and that with the right preparation their children can go to college if they choose to do so.

(d) Provide a clear path and direct assistance for pupils through middle schools, high schools, community colleges, universities, and state and federal financial aid programs, thereby improving opportunity and efficiency.

(e) Strengthen the state's historic promise of college access made in the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education and express this commitment directly to middle and high school pupils and their families.

(f) Prepare the highly skilled workforce necessary to keep California's economy competitive, maintain the income and quality of life for California residents, increase tax revenues, and provide for improved civic and democratic participation.

54711. (a) (1) Participation by pupils and school districts in the Early Commitment to College program is voluntary. A school district that chooses to participate in the program is encouraged to do so districtwide, with all schools in the district participating, and shall provide schoolwide college information and college preparation events inclusive of pupils who sign the "Save Me a Spot in College" pledge. An elementary school district may distribute the general letter as set forth in subdivision (f) of Section 54712, but if the elementary school district chooses to participate in the program, it shall do so in collaboration with the high school district in which the predominant number of its pupils attend.

(2) Participation by colleges and universities in the Early Commitment to College program is voluntary.

(3) For purposes of this article, all of the following apply:

(A) "College Opportunity Zone" means the 30 percent of public schools that maintain any of grades 6 to 9, inclusive, with the highest proportion of low-income pupils.

(B) "Low-income pupil" means a pupil who is eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

(4) Schools designated as a College Opportunity Zone in a participating school district shall give all pupils enrolled in grades 6 to 9, inclusive, and their parents and guardians, the opportunity to sign a "Save Me a Spot in College" pledge.

(5) Schools not designated as a College Opportunity Zone, in a participating school district, shall give a pupil who is eligible for free and reduced-price meals and is enrolled in grades 6 to 9, inclusive, and his or her parent or guardian the opportunity to sign a "Save Me a Spot in College" pledge.

(b) A participating school district shall certify that a pupil has completed the "Save Me a Spot in College" pledge pursuant to Section 54713, and shall track pupils enrolled in the Early Commitment to College program by recording and reporting participation and outcome data as directed by the Superintendent.

(c) Any school that has pupils who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the National School Lunch Program is encouraged to participate in the Early Commitment to College program.

(d) A pupil scheduled to graduate from high school after 2017 shall not be allowed to enroll in the program.

54712. The Superintendent shall perform the following responsibilities:

(a) Identify schools as College Opportunity Zones.

(b) Develop the “Save Me a Spot in College” pledge, which shall include the commitments made by the pupil and the major postsecondary and financial aid opportunities provided by the state. The pledge shall contain all of the following assurances:

(1) A pupil who signs the pledge and enrolls in the Early Commitment to College program, in the same manner as all other pupils, shall be eligible to continue his or her postsecondary education at a campus of the California Community Colleges to pursue career technical education or an associate degree, or to prepare for transfer to a four-year college or university, or, if he or she meets the admission requirements and applies for admission, at the University of California or the California State University.

(2) A pupil who signs the pledge and meets all the eligibility requirements of the Cal Grant Program (Article 3 (commencing with Section 69530) of Chapter 2 of Part 42 of Division 5 of Title 3) at the time of application shall be eligible to receive a Cal Grant award.

(3) In a manner that is consistent with Article 1 (commencing with Section 76300) of Chapter 2 of Part 47 of Division 7 of Title 3, a pupil who signs the pledge shall receive, upon enrollment at a community college, a fee waiver under the fee waiver program of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges for two or more years of enrollment at a campus of the California Community Colleges, as long as the student is a California resident and continues to show financial need on a completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

(c) Consult with the California Community Colleges, the University of California, the California State University, the Student Aid Commission, and independent colleges and universities in developing the pledge, letter, and supporting materials, including a method for participating school districts to notify colleges and universities in their service area that the school district is participating in the program and seeking partnerships with colleges, universities, and others to plan and conduct activities to implement the program.

(d) Determine the form of recognition for pupils who have been certified by his or her school district as having fulfilled the requirements of the pledge pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 54711.

(e) Develop a method by which participating schools shall record and report participation in, and outcome data of, the Early Commitment to College program to the Superintendent pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 54711.

(f) (1) Develop a letter addressed to pupils enrolled in grades 6 to 9, inclusive, and their parents or guardians, and signed by the Superintendent and the superintendent of the school district that describes the major steps to prepare for college, including postsecondary career technical education, and the major postsecondary and financial aid opportunities available to students in California.

(2) Develop a second letter signed by the Superintendent and the superintendent of the school district, to be directed to pupils eligible to sign the pledge pursuant to Section 54711, and their parents or guardians, that details the Early Commitment to College Program, including the pledge, in addition to the information in the letter directed to all students in grades 6 to 9, inclusive. Make both letters and information on the Early Commitment to College program available on the Web site of the department and request all school districts to distribute the letters as appropriate through existing means to all pupils and their parents.

54713. (a) A pupil who signs a pledge declares a commitment to prepare for college, finish high school, and enroll in college and commits to do all of the following:

(1) Meet all graduation requirements to finish high school in California.

(2) Enroll in college preparatory coursework, which may include career technical coursework and the course requirements for admission to the University of California and the California State University.

(3) Seek to achieve proficiency in mathematics and in reading and writing in English, as demonstrated by results on the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program pursuant to Section 60640. Pupils attending nonpublic schools, which do not participate in the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program pursuant to Section 60640, shall seek to achieve proficiency in mathematics and reading and writing in English as demonstrated by results on other assessments of college-level readiness.

(4) Complete and file a free application for federal student aid and submit his or her grade point average to the Student Aid Commission by March 2 of his or her senior year.

(5) Meet application and other requirements for university admission or enroll directly in community college within 12 months after high school graduation.

(b) School districts that choose to participate in the voluntary Early Commitment to College program shall provide information and services, through existing programs to pupils, not exclusive of those who sign the pledge, through their middle school and high school years. These services shall include all of the following:

(1) At the time of enrollment, each pupil shall receive a certificate of participation in the Early Commitment to College program, with his or her name, and bearing the signature of the Superintendent and the superintendent of the school district.

(2) Participating pupils also shall receive a booklet of college information providing more specific information about eligibility requirements, preparation steps, and other pertinent information.

(3) Transcript review and academics assessment, leading to course planning for the pupil at the time of enrollment in the Early Commitment to College program and annual reporting to the pupil and his or her parent or guardian on how he or she is doing relative to state standards and other benchmarks.

(4) Information about the Golden State Scholarshare College Savings Trust (Article 19 (commencing with Section 69980) of Chapter 2 of Part 42 of Division 5 of Title 3) at the time of enrollment.

(5) A visit to at least one community college, including, but not necessarily limited to, exposure to career technical education and transfer programs, and, where geographically feasible, at least one four-year college in grade 9 or 10.

(6) Information on college admissions tests in grade 11.

(7) Information on college admission and community college enrollment steps in grade 12.

(8) Information on the financial aid application process, including, but not limited to, the free application for federal student aid and grade point average verification, in grade 12.

(9) Information communicating that a pupil who has signed the pledge and transfers out of a participating school district shall not receive the recognition set forth in subdivision (d) of Section 54712, unless he or she attends another school district that is participating in the program. The new school district may obtain the pupil's record of participation in the program from the original school district or the pupil may request to sign the pledge again, including after grade 9, only if he or she provides documentation that he or she was enrolled in the program in his or her original school district.

54714. (a) The Legislature encourages the California Community Colleges, the University of California, the California State University, independent colleges and universities, the California Student Opportunity and Access Program, the Student Aid Commission, and other nonprofit, business, or other community organizations to provide support services as needed in coordination with school districts.

(b) Nothing in this article prohibits public and private colleges and universities from maintaining existing, or entering into new, supplemental agreements with school districts and their pupils to offer a guarantee of admission, supplemental services, supplemental financial aid, or other opportunities for alignment of prerequisites or curriculum.

54715. On or before November 1, 2017, the Superintendent shall submit to the Legislature a report on the status of the program, including, but not limited to, the following information:

(a) The number of school districts and pupils participating in the program.

(b) The number of participating pupils who fulfilled the requirements of the pledge pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 54711.

(c) Any relevant outcome data reported by school districts to the Superintendent pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 54711.

As part of this report, the Superintendent shall provide a recommendation on whether the program should be continued.

54716. This article shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2019, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that becomes operative on or before January 1, 2019, deletes or extends that date.