



How-To Guide for Supporters of AB 1456

Op-eds, Letters to the Editor, Social Media Engagement and Creating Content related to #AB1456

Most news outlets welcome opinion articles and letters to the editor from members of the public on issues of importance to the community. Social media platforms also provide many avenues for getting your voice heard.

As a supporter of the Cal Grant Equity Framework and Student Aid Index proposal, you can help amplify the important messages our leaders need to hear to ensure this measure becomes law and students get the resources they need to thrive in college and the workforce through these avenues. Here are some tips to help supporters of AB 1456 engage effectively:

How To Write & Submit an Op-ed to a News Outlet

To have an op-ed commentary published, you must submit it with your name, a short bio description such as your affiliated organization, your email address and phone number. Only your name and bio information gets published, but the extra information helps the news outlet ensure you are who you say you are while providing contact information in case they have any questions.

Follow these tips:

- Length: 500-600 words
- Tell a story. Why would readers care about what you have to say? How does this affect your work, your community?
- Be sure to make these points in your piece regarding AB 1456:
 - ✓ The state financial aid system has not been updated in five decades.
 - ✓ More than 7 of 10 students had lost some or all of their income due to the pandemic according to the Spring COVID-19 Survey of 76,000 incoming or returning college students by the California Student Aid Commission in May 2020 [linked here](#).
 - ✓ As our state has grown more populous and diverse, equitable access to financial aid awards has not kept pace, especially for non-traditional students like adult learners and returning students who make up a growing share of enrollment.
 - ✓ Cost of living and basic needs expenses have grown exponentially, but the state's financial aid system has not factored in the true costs of college, rendering higher education unaffordable for too many Californians.
 - ✓ State elected leaders have an opportunity to remodel our Cal Grant system to better serve the needs of students by aligning our programs with new federal policy changes for financial aid recently approved by Congress.
 - ✓ Assembly Bill 1456, authored by Jose Medina (D-Riverside) and Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento) along with Sen. Connie Leyva (D-Chino) will simplify our Cal Grant system to serve MORE students.



- Add any information important to you and your work, whether it is ensuring a strong, educated and skilled workforce for the future or making major strides in truly helping California be a state that is truly equitable for its diverse population.

How to Write a Letter-to-the-Editor

The Letter-to-the-Editor format is used to respond to something in the paper. If you see an article about college students or the state's economic recovery efforts, weigh in with a letter about how AB 1456 can be part of the solution. Most news outlets have an online submission form to make submission easy. Follow these tips:

- ✓ Keep letters short.
- ✓ Stay within the outlet's word limit or the letter will get rejected. It is usually around 150 words.
- ✓ Make your main point early rather than repeating a negative point the story you are responding to may have made.
- ✓ Be sure to include the bill number and Cal Grant Modernization in your letter along with a key message, such as:
 - "Simplifying and expanding the Cal Grant program will help students today and our state tomorrow. None of us can afford to wait."
 - "Lawmakers can show students who may have stopped attending college due to the pandemic that they care by improving our state financial aid program with AB 1456."

Social Media Engagement Tips & Content

Another opportunity to join the California Student Aid Commission in promoting AB 1456 on social media is by deploying the press kit [linked here](#) to share sample posts and graphics directly to your organizations' and personal channels. We recommend engaging with the following key Twitter handles and hashtags to share your support for AB 1456.

Key Twitter handles to tag:

- @AsmJoseMedina
- @AsmKevinMcCarty
- @SenatorLeyva
- @CAStudentAid

Key hashtags:

- #AB1456
- #FixFinancialAid
- #CalGrantModernization
- #CalGrantEquityFramework
- #CAFinancialAid
- #CAHigherEd
- #CAStudentsSpeak
- #SupportStudents



Talking points for organic social posts:

- Reforming our financial aid system will make California a more equitable, diverse state. AB1456 will make higher education accessible to all Californians.
- Cal Grant, the nation's largest state financial aid system, has not been updated to reflect the needs of the students of today. California leaders have the opportunity to streamline our state financial aid system with new federal guidelines, making Cal Grant more accessible for students.
- Remodeling our financial aid system will help us reach more students and produce a more competitive and diverse workforce. We must prioritize financial aid reform as California works to recover from COVID-19.

Be sure to follow and engage with the California Student Aid Commission (@CAStudentAid) on Twitter for updates on AB 1456!

Your Organizations' Website, Newsletter and Blog

The Student Aid Commission has a wealth of materials that can be repurposed for your organizations' newsletter, website, and blog channels. [Linked here](#) is a dedicated webpage with fact sheets, FAQs, two-pagers, press releases and messaging that could be directly pulled to create your own content as it relates to your organization's mission.