

SB 849 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 4/26

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Defines "benefits navigator" as person trained to assist students with applying for and receiving need-based financial benefits provided by federal, state and local programs. Requires each public university and community college to train and employ benefits navigators. Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Higher Education Coordinating Commission to be distributed to each public university and community college for hiring benefits navigators. Requires each public university and community college to participate in statewide consortium for benefits navigators to develop best practices and facilitate communication. Requires each public university and community college to develop process for student feedback and improvement on delivering benefit assistance. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Many students at institutions of higher education face challenges in affording basic needs while receiving their education. Students have reported higher than average rates of food insecurity. These students may be eligible for need-based public assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Medicaid. Additional local programs may offer housing assistance, childcare, or financial assistance for textbooks.

Senate Bill 849 mirrors the provisions of House Bill 2835, which passed out of the House Education Committee on a unanimous vote on March 4, 2021 and was referred to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. That measure has no revenue impact and an estimated fiscal impact of \$5 million for each of the next two biennia.

Senate Bill 849 requires each public university and community college to train and employ a benefits navigator who will assist students with determining eligibility and applying for public assistance benefits, and establishes related requirements.