



## The National Economic Development & Law Center

2201 Broadway-Suite 815, Oakland, CA 94612  
Phone: (510) 251-2600 Fax: (510) 251-0600 [www.nedlc.org](http://www.nedlc.org)

August 12, 2002

Senator Dede Alpert, Chairperson  
Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education  
Legislative Office Building  
1020 N Street, Room 560  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Alpert:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the California Master Plan for Education. I am writing on behalf of Californians for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency (CFESS), a project of the National Economic Development & Law Center. CFESS is a statewide policy coalition comprised of community colleges, welfare agencies, women's and grassroots organizations, human service agencies, workforce/economic development organizations and job training agencies. We advocate for policies that will move families out of poverty through postsecondary education, high wage job training, microenterprise and asset development, and adoption of the Self-Sufficiency Standard. CFESS' recommendations are based on the Master Plan's vision that the California school system will "...prepare all students for learning and for transition to and success in the next level of education, the workforce, and society at large, and that is fully responsive to the changing needs of our state and our people."

**1. The State should continue to support services for students at Community Colleges who are in the CalWORKs program.**

The California Community Colleges successfully provide opportunities for students on CalWORKs to move towards economic self-sufficiency, through job/internship placement, career advising, benefit counseling and child care services. In fact, according to a May 2002 study by the Center for Law and Social Policy, CalWORKs students who graduated from a California Community College with an Associates' Degree *increased their earnings by 85%* after one year out of school.<sup>1</sup> Master Plan Recommendations 12.7 and 26 should include continued support for CalWORKs programs at Community Colleges as one of the already-established links between the colleges and the workforce development system, as well as the world of work.

**2. The State should utilize the Self-Sufficiency Standard to measure the effectiveness of the educational system for moving adult students into jobs that will pay a decent wage.**

To analyze the effectiveness of adult education programs for attaining individual self-sufficiency (Recommendation 38), the State should consider using the Self-Sufficiency Standard. The Self-

---

<sup>1</sup> "Credentials Count: How California's Community Colleges Help Parents Move from Welfare to Self-Sufficiency," Center for Law and Social Policy (Washington DC, May 2002), available at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).

Sufficiency Standard calculates the amount required to live at a basic level in each county of California.<sup>1</sup> The Standard has been incorporated into AB 2386 (Keeley) as a way to determine how community college students on CalWORKs should be allowed extra time to complete programs that will lead to a self-sufficiency wage job, and has been distributed to welfare agencies in an All-County Information Notice by CA Department of Social Services.<sup>2</sup> In the educational system, the Self-Sufficiency Standard can be used as a benchmark for individual vocational counseling, as well as a way to measure program effectiveness at “closing the gap” between a student’s wage before entering school and after exiting school.

**3. The State should implement financial aid mechanisms that take into account the needs of students with dependent children, especially those parents who are on CalWORKs.**

In 1999, thousands of California community college students who qualify for financial aid did not receive it.<sup>3</sup> The State should include in the Master Plan institutional support for existing efforts within the community college system to better inform students of their opportunities to receive financial aid to which they are entitled.

Single mothers and their dependents have the highest poverty rate in California,<sup>4</sup> and the state educational system should develop and support policy that is responsive to the particular needs of this group to access educational opportunities. As such, Recommendation 51 should include a provision to expand CalGrant funding for students with dependent children.

**4. The State should incorporate widespread assessment of adults with learning disabilities in adult schools.**

Although schools are required to accommodate students with disabilities, accommodation without assessment is nearly useless for those who may not know they have a disability or cannot afford the cost of a private assessment. In Recommendation 38, the Master Plan should include a provision to support more uniform and widespread services to assess the existence of learning disabilities among adult school students.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Master Plan.

Sincerely,

Aimee Durfee  
Coordinator  
Californians for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency

---

<sup>1</sup> “The Self-Sufficiency Standard for California,” Wider Opportunities for Women, 2000, available at [www.sixstrategies.org](http://www.sixstrategies.org).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acin00/pdf/I-123\\_00.pdf](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acin00/pdf/I-123_00.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> “Students Need to Know More About Aid, Educators Say,” Los Angeles Times, August 11, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> “Failing to Make Ends Meet: A Report on the Economic Status of Women in California,” The Women’s Foundation (San Francisco, May 2002), available at [www.twfusa.org](http://www.twfusa.org).

