



February 16, 2018

Honorable Holly J. Mitchell
Chair, Standing Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5080
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Jim Nielsen
Vice Chair, Standing Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
State Capitol, Room 2068
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Governor Brown's Proposal for a Fully Online Community College

Dear Senator Mitchell and Senator Nielsen,

The Bay Area Council, a non-profit public policy advocacy organization representing hundreds of the largest employers in the Bay Area, submits this letter in support of Governor Brown's proposed online community college. This letter is a follow-up to the comments provided by Linda Bidrossian, Senior Vice President of Policy at the Bay Area Council, during the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee hearing on February 8, 2018.

Employers in the Bay Area and throughout the state of California are desperate for more local, qualified talent, and have expressed pain points related to filling their middle-skills jobs. In the Bay Area alone, tens of thousands of these jobs go unfilled each year. Middle-skills jobs typically require an associate's degree, certificate, badging, or extensive experience, and often pay above living wages and offer career growth pathways. The California Community Colleges are an excellent resource for training and readying individuals for middle-skills jobs, and there is no doubt that their 114 schools throughout the state (with 28 here in the Bay Area region) are serving a great need.

Despite the reach of the community colleges, it is time that California take an innovative approach to meeting the needs of the nearly 2.5 million adults aged 25 to 34 who graduated from high school but lack a college degree. By developing a new, online educational delivery model that reaches working adults and offers an opportunity to develop new skills, we can address the talent needs of our region and state's employers while connecting individuals to in-demand career opportunities.

Of course, as others have stated, online education won't serve every student or career need. Existing brick and mortar colleges will continue to play critical roles in education and training throughout the state. However, Governor Brown's proposed online community college represents a long overdue response to pressing needs for more qualified talent, and we urge you to approve the startup and ongoing funds. It is essential to broaden working adults' accessibility to education to support the continued economic growth of our state as well as the financial well-being of our residents, and there is no time to waste.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Wunderman".

Jim Wunderman
President & CEO
Bay Area Council



CC: Senator Joel Anderson
Senator Jim Beall
Senator Steven M. Glazer
Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson
Senator Mike McGuire
Senator Tony Mendoza
Senator Bill Monning
Senator John M. W. Moorlach
Senator Richard Pan
Senator Anthony J. Portantino
Senator Richard D. Roth
Senator Nancy Skinner
Senator Jeff Stone
Senator Bob Wieckowski
Senator Scott Wilk