March 29, 2018

The Honorable Jim Beall
California State Senate
State Capitol Building, Room 2082
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT SB 940 (BEALL) — CAL GRANT ACCESS FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Dear Senator Beall,

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce is pleased to co-sponsor Senate Bill 940, which would increase the rate of college success among California’s foster youth by increasing access to the Cal Grant program. The largest state financial aid program, the Cal Grant program provides students up to a maximum of $12,630 in grant aid each year.

The L.A. Area Chamber recognizes the strong connection between our region’s economic viability and the educational success of our students. With the nation’s largest foster care system here in Los Angeles, it is vital to the social and economic wellbeing of our region that foster youth receive access to financial aid programs that enable them to finance a postsecondary education. Evidence shows that financial aid attainment is a strong predictor of degree attainment; students who access aid have higher rates of persistence, transfer, and undergraduate degree completion. Yet, our foster youth remain severely underrepresented among Cal Grant recipients. Of California foster youth enrolled across our state’s community colleges, just 9% receive a Cal Grant.

SB 940 would improve Cal Grant access for California foster youth by:

- Removing the requirement that foster youth apply for an entitlement Cal Grant within one year of high school graduation (instead authorizing foster youth to receive an entitlement grant if they meet existing eligibility criteria and have not reached their 26th birthday as of July 1 of the award year)
- Extending the length of time a foster youth is eligible for the Cal Grant from 4 years to 8 years
- Changing the deadline for the Cal Grant entitlement application from March 2nd to September 2nd for foster youth applying to attend community college.

These provisions address the unique barriers that foster youth face in pursuing higher education and will help modernize our state financial aid programs to better serve our highest needs students.

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce thanks you for authoring this valuable bill and strongly supports its passage.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Toebben
President & CEO
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

David Rattray
Executive Vice President, Center for Education Excellence and Talent Development
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce