



ASSEMBLYMEMBER — DISTRICT 26

Patrick Ahrens

P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

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Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens Introduces Legislation to Reduce Barriers to Higher Education for At-Risk Youth

SACRAMENTO, CA – Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens (D-Silicon Valley) introduced his first bill today, which seeks to reduce barriers to our public higher education institutions for youth that are involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems. AB 243 will require public higher education institutions to accept an attestation from a local education agency, county probation department, or welfare department as proof of financial independence for the purposes of admissions or financial aid applications.

Assemblymember Ahrens said, “I am proud to introduce my first bill to help the most at-risk students in our community in seeking higher education opportunities. Helping young people that are involved with the juvenile justice or child welfare systems to get access to a higher education will increase the likelihood they are successful and productive members of our community while decreasing the chances that they end up incarcerated as an adult. I am excited to work with the County of Santa Clara to help our most at-risk youth more easily access our public higher education institutions, meet their higher education goals, and become productive community members.”

Under existing law, these systems-involved youth often encounter challenges providing necessary proof of their financial independence from their parents or the need for medical, disability, or other accommodation, which creates a sometimes insurmountable barrier for accessing post-secondary education. This legislation creates a streamlined process where local governments can better assist at-risk youth in gaining access to public higher education institutions.

AB 243 is sponsored by the County of Santa Clara and awaits referral to policy committees in the State Assembly.

“This bill would enable the County and other local governments to help youth involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems to pursue their dreams of higher education,” said James R. Williams, County Executive for the County of Santa Clara. “In partnership with Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens, we aim to remove barriers to higher education that disproportionately affect Latino and Black youth and prevent young people from reaching their full potential.”

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Patrick Ahrens represents the Silicon Valley in the California State Assembly. He was elected in 2024 after serving as a Trustee on the Foothill-De Anza Community College District Board. Assemblymember Ahrens is the Co-Chair of the California Legislative Technology & Innovation Caucus, and a Member of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus and the Bay Area Caucus.