



ASSEMBLYMEMBER — DISTRICT 26

Patrick Ahrens

P R E S S R E L A S E

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Governor Signs AB 243 by Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens to Reduce Barriers to Higher Education for At-Risk Youth

SACRAMENTO, CA – California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens' (D-Silicon Valley) legislation [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 243](#) which will reduce barriers to our higher education institutions for youth who are involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems.

Assemblymember Ahrens said, "I am proud to help break down bureaucratic barriers so that students can pursue their higher education dreams. This law will increase the likelihood that our most at-risk young people become productive, contributing members of our communities, and decrease the chances they will be incarcerated as an adult. Thank you to Governor Newsom for signing this important bill."

Beginning January 1, 2026, AB 243 requires 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.

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 higher education institutions. AB 243 is sponsored by the County of Santa Clara and Santa Clara County Office of Education.

"Every young person in our community deserves the chance to pursue their dreams of higher education, and the passage of AB 243 helps counties and other local governments reduce administrative hurdles for youth, particularly those in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems," said James R. Williams, Santa Clara County Executive. "We thank Governor Newsom and Assemblymember Ahrens for their commitment to removing barriers to higher education and ensuring that young people across our state can achieve their goals."

"As the educational provider for incarcerated youth, our school staff work tirelessly to support their educational aspirations," said Dr. David Toston, the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools. "Our student's financial aid for college have been delayed or even denied due to unnecessary barriers, and so we proudly co-sponsored AB 243. Supporting our incarcerated youth is a strong priority for the Santa Clara County Board of Education, and I want to thank Assemblymember Ahrens and Governor Newsom."

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[Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens](#) represents the Silicon Valley in the California State Assembly for District 26. He serves on the Assembly Committees on Budget, Business and Professions, Communications and Conveyance, Rules, Transportation, and Budget Subcommittee No. 2 on Human Services. Assemblymember Ahrens is the Co-Chair of the California Legislative Technology & Innovation Caucus, and a member of the California Legislative Jewish and Bay Area Caucuses.