



## Legislative Analysis: Licensing

<b>BILL NUMBER:</b>	AB 323
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Strong Workforce Program
<b>VERSION:</b>	As Revised March 19, 2025
<b>AUTHOR:</b>	Mike Fong
<b>SPONSOR:</b>	

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION:**

This bill allows community college districts (CCDs) to use Strong Workforce Program (SWP) funds to provide direct support to students, employers, or both, for paid work-based learning opportunities, and requires the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to revise policies, regulations, and guidance regarding such opportunities by June 30, 2026.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** SUPPORT

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Strong Workforce Program (SWP) is a K-14 state education, economic, and workforce development initiative for the purpose of expanding the availability of high quality, industry-valued career technical education and workforce development courses. Local Educational Agencies (LEA) CCDs, and others collaborate with local and regional governments, and industry partners to meet the career technical educational workforce needs of a given region.

“Earn and learn” training programs allow a person to receive compensation while also receiving the necessary training to learn the skills for a specific occupation. Apprenticeship, one of the highest standards of earn and learn, is a paid on-the-job training and education model and, in order to be registered at either the federal or state level, must have a number of components, which add rigor and standards. In 2016, AB 2105 (Rodriguez, Chapter 410, Statutes of 2016) required the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to carry out a stakeholder process to update policies and remove barriers to facilitate the development of

# Legislative Analysis: Licensing

earn and learn training programs, which include apprenticeships in the allied health professions. AB 2105 provided an opportunity for DCA to lead a stakeholder process aimed at addressing workforce needs in allied health professions.

In April 2018, DCA convened a Planning Committee (Committee) to provide technical assistance and guidance with this effort. The Committee was comprised of subject matter experts representing health care employers, education, labor unions, community-based organizations, and government agencies. A subcommittee on Nursing, in which both BRN and BVNPT participated, was also established and was tasked with researching and compiling information on existing earn and learn training programs. The final report can be found here: [Barriers and Recommendations to Facilitating Earn and Learn Training Programs in Allied Health Professions](#).

According to the author, paid internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based experiences bridge academics with hands-on experience. Currently, it is unclear whether SWP funds can be used for this purpose. AB 323 clarifies that funds may be used to provide support to students, employers, or both, for paid work-based learning, which will increase employability of students and provide opportunities for long-term employment.

AB 323 requires the CCCCO, no later than June 30, 2026, to revise policies, regulations, and guidance necessary to provide students, employers, or both, with paid work-based learning opportunities. The bill would authorize community college districts to also use those funds to provide direct support to students, employers, or both, for paid work-based learning to increase employability and employment, including but not limited to apprenticeships, internships, externships, and student-run enterprises.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Approximately 37 of the 163 approved Vocational Nursing programs are housed at Community College campuses, as are 10 out of the 11 Psychiatric Technician programs. Over the years, these programs have been very successful. They are based in less-served diverse regions of California and charge a more modest tuition than most private for-profit schools, helping to make career technical education more available.

California and the nation have a dangerous and increasing shortage of trained professionals in the healing arts, which has worsened in the post-COVID years. BVNPT continues to build the pipeline of prelicensure training programs and ensuring that all programs are compliant

# Legislative Analysis: Licensing

with laws and regulations. The number of programs, and the number of graduates is growing steadily.

A key barrier to licensure for many individuals is the need to work while attending school. In particular, Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) often apply to take the NCLEX based on their work experience. In most cases, CNAs don't have the training in theory, or in LVN-specific hands-on work. Most cannot afford to stop working in order to enroll in an approved school. Earn and Learn opportunities through the Community Colleges would provide a solid path to licensure and careers. These programs could also help lessen the compaction of clinical sites.

## **FISCAL:**

One-time General Fund costs ranging from \$13,000 to \$58,000 for the CCCCO to update its policies regarding allowable expenditures under the SWP and provide updated guidance and technical assistance.

## **SUPPORT:**

Los Angeles Community College District (Co-Sponsor)  
San Diego Community College District (Co-Sponsor)  
Student Senate for California Community Colleges (Co-Sponsor)  
Antelope Valley Community College District  
Calbright College  
California Chamber of Commerce  
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office  
Cerritos College  
CFT-A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO  
Chabot Las Positas Community College District  
Citrus College  
Coast Community College District  
Compton Community College District  
Contra Costa Community College District  
El Camino Community College District  
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges  
Foothill-De Anza Community College District  
Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District  
Hartnell Community College District

# Legislative Analysis: Licensing

Immigrants Rising  
Kern Community College District  
Los Angeles City College (LACC)  
Los Angeles Pierce College  
Los Rios Community College District  
Miracosta Community College District  
Mt. San Antonio College  
Mt. San Jacinto Community College District  
Nextgen California  
North Orange County Community College District  
Pasadena Area Community College District  
Rancho Santiago Community College District  
Rio Hondo College  
San Bernardino Community College District  
San Diego Mesa College  
San Diego Unified School District  
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District  
Santa Monica Community College District  
Santiago Canyon College  
South Orange County Community College District  
Southwestern Community College District  
State Center Community College District  
Victor Valley Community College District  
Vision Y Compromiso

**OPPOSITION:**

None on file.