



## **AB 664: Expanding Opportunity - Workforce-Aligned Baccalaureate Degrees at Southwestern College**

### **Summary:**

AB 664 aims to enhance access to specialized baccalaureate degree programs that align with workforce needs by permitting the Southwestern Community College District (SWC) to offer a limited number of these degrees. This legislative effort seeks to directly address the pressing labor shortages in the region, foster educational equity, and stimulate economic growth, ultimately creating pathways for South San Diego County residents to secure stable, fulfilling careers.

### **Background:**

Chula Vista, the largest city in California with a population exceeding 200,000, currently lacks a public university that provides baccalaureate degree programs. This absence presents a significant hurdle for the 585,000 residents of South San Diego County, where SWC stands as the singular public postsecondary educational institution. Labor market analyses conducted by the San Diego Regional Policy and Innovation Center, in partnership with the University Now Initiative, have pinpointed 147 priority occupations essential for the region's economic vitality. Many of these roles demand baccalaureate degrees, yet current offerings from post-secondary institutions do not adequately meet this need.

### **Problem:**

Without affordable and accessible options for higher education, local students face a stark choice: either relocate to pursue their educational aspirations or abandon them altogether. This predicament not only stifles individual potential but also undermines the broader economic development of the region.

The lack of degree programs perpetuates a cycle of educational inequity, particularly impacting underserved communities, which include a significant proportion of bilingual and binational students in the U.S.-Mexico border area.

### **Solution:**

AB 664 presents a clear solution by authorizing SWC to introduce up to four workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs tailored to address the unmet needs of the local job market. These programs will be meticulously crafted using comprehensive labor market data to ensure they target high-demand fields. Importantly, this initiative will circumvent unnecessary duplications of offerings from nearby California State University (CSU) campuses and the University of California (UC) system, thereby providing a viable alternative for students when existing public institutions fall short.

Furthermore, successful implementation of AB 664 will require collaboration among SWC, CSU San Marcos, SDSU, and UC San Diego to align educational offerings with regional workforce demands, optimizing pathways for students. By fostering local talent and reducing the outflow of economic resources to other areas of the state, this initiative promises not only to uplift individual lives but also to invigorate the entire South San Diego County economy.

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**Support:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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