

## PRESS RELEASE

DATE: October 18, 2019

CONTACT: Selina Weiss, (415) 543-3379, sweiss@ylc.org

Mitch Bailey, (650) 574-6510, baileym@smccd.edu

### **California Governor Takes Major First Step to Support Postsecondary Access and Success for Youth in Juvenile Detention**

*New law requires county probation departments and DJJ to provide access to online college courses to youth in juvenile detention who have their high school diploma or equivalency and encourages new on- and off-campus partnerships for youth.*

SACRAMENTO, CA – On Saturday, October 12, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law Youth Law Center-sponsored Senate Bill 716, opening new pathways to educational opportunity and success for youth in California detention facilities.

The bill, authored by Senator Holly Mitchell, requires county probation departments and the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to partner with public community colleges and universities to provide access to online academic and career technical programs to youth currently in detention who have completed their high school diploma or California equivalency certificate.

While serious juvenile crime has decreased across the state, annual costs to incarcerate one child in juvenile hall have skyrocketed to an average of \$284,700—far exceeding the cost of tuition and housing at the most expensive private universities in the nation. Yet, many youth who have completed their high school diploma or equivalent currently receive no education programming in detention, when they could be working towards a college degree or preparing to enroll in college upon return to their home and community. This void disparately impacts youth of color, primarily Black and Latinx students, who are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system because of the criminalization of youthful behavior.

“Youth with juvenile justice system involvement want to go to college,” says Lucy Salcido Carter, policy advocate for Youth Law Center. “While our ultimate goal is to see youth in their families and communities rather than in detention, this new law helps address one harm that youth suffer while incarcerated: educational neglect. SB 716 provides high school graduates in detention access to a postsecondary education that can expedite their successful return to the community. And it paves the way for all youth with juvenile justice system involvement to be able to go to college.”

SB 716 supports opportunities for youth to start their college education while in detention and prepares them to continue their studies on campus when they leave the facility. The bill also encourages partnerships with local college campuses to serve youth in the community, allowing movement towards college as a diversion strategy.



832 Folsom Street, Suite 700  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
Phone: 415-543-3379  
Fax: 415-956-9022  
[www.ylc.org](http://www.ylc.org)

San Mateo County Community College District is a key partner in this statewide work to expand educational opportunities for vulnerable youth and in 2018 co-hosted with Youth Law Center the first Pathways to Higher Education conference in California. The District's Project Change is a model program that offers college courses to incarcerated youth, wrap-around support services on campus for students with juvenile justice system involvement, and opportunities for student leadership and civic engagement.

Project Change founder, Katie Bliss, and students in the program testified in support of SB 716 in Senate and Assembly policy committee hearings.

"Access to a higher education for anyone who seeks it is a central mission for all California community colleges and is particularly important for populations who have historically been underrepresented for college attainment; SB 716 embodies this mission," says Katie Bliss. "Young people in juvenile detention are motivated to pursue their college education and when given the opportunity, become leaders and scholars. This legislation marks a critical milestone in the incredible movement happening across California to ensure our youth have educational equity."

Youth Law Center will work closely with Project Change and other partners to support the implementation of Senate Bill 716, as part of ongoing statewide efforts to bring more Pathways to Higher Education to system-impacted youth.

For more information about Youth Law Center's Pathways to Higher Education work, visit: [www.ylc.org/pathways](http://www.ylc.org/pathways). For more information about San Mateo County Community College District's Project Change, visit: <https://collegeofsanmateo.edu/projectchange/>.

###

### **About Us**

The Youth Law Center advocates to transform foster care and juvenile justice systems across the nation so every child and youth can thrive.