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**For Immediate Release: August 28, 2024**  
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## **Portantino Bill to Assist Student Refugees Passes Senate, Goes to Governor**

**Sacramento, CA** – Senate Bill 971, authored by Senator Anthony J. Portantino (D – Burbank), passed the Senate Floor. The measure, which awaits the Governor’s signature, will make higher education more affordable for low income refugees by exempting them from paying nonresident tuition fees. Senator Portantino was inspired to author the bill by Glendale Community College students who raised tuition funds to help students who were displaced from Artsakh by Azerbaijan.

**“Helping young people attain a higher education degree is the sensible and nurturing thing to do and I am grateful to my friends at GCC for bringing this bill idea to me,”** stated Senator Portantino. **“California and the 25<sup>th</sup> State Senate District have a strong, recent history of supporting and welcoming immigrants who contribute positively to our community.”**

Due to a growing number of regional conflicts throughout the world, many individuals seek safe haven through immigration to the United States and establish residency in California. These individuals often turn to education to improve their lives and become full participants in our communities. Ineligibility for financial aid can make the cost of college disproportionately higher and unaffordable.

SB 971 would exempt from the nonresident tuition fee a nonresident, low-income student who is a resident of a region impacted by war or other regional conflict and registers for lower division courses at the Glendale Community College District or the Contra Costa Community College District. The measure requires the governing boards of the two community colleges that choose to use this exemption to adopt one uniform policy to determine a student’s residence. It also requires the district to establish procedures for an appeal and review of the residence classification, and to determine whether a student is low income.

**“Glendale Community College is grateful to see SB 971 make it through the Legislature. We hope the Governor will sign this important measure that will bring much needed support to those escaping hardship and seeking educational opportunities. Seeing an influx of those impacted by regional conflicts, this bill supports the full integration of refugee students into our community as well as our local economy,”** stated Desirée Portillo Rabinov, Board President of Glendale Community College.

**“Our mission includes fostering a strong community bond and supporting every student with an educational environment where they can take the next steps toward their future endeavors,”** said Dr. Ryan Cornner, Superintendent/President of Glendale Community College. **“Glendale has a history supporting recent immigrant communities who have become integral parts of our community. We thank Senator Portantino and the Legislature for allowing us to more effectively meet the needs of our community with SB 971.”**

A large number of Armenians were displaced from Artsakh, many of whom found their way to California. Los Angeles County is home to a large diaspora of Armenians and will continue to see increased immigration of individuals seeking safety and opportunity. Similar displacements have been seen in Ukraine.

**“SB 971 will provide equitable educational opportunities for refugee students affected by global conflicts,”** stated Amaras Issagholian, President of the Armenian Students Association of Glendale Community College. **“This bill underscores our commitment to inclusivity and acknowledges the hardships that refugees students face when escaping from violence. We look forward to the Governor’s signature on this measure in order to help us build a brighter future for those who seek refuge.”**

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Regards,

Lerna Kayserian Shirinian  
Communications Director  
Senator Anthony J. Portantino