February 14, 2022

The Honorable Josh Becker

Senator, 13th District

State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUPPORT – SB 893 – FREE / REDUCED COST COLLEGE FOR SAN MATEO COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS USING EXISTING LOCAL REVENUES**

Dear Senator Becker:

On behalf of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I write to support your Senate Bill 893 which has the potential to reduce the cost of community college for thousands of San Mateo County residents attending the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD).

SMCCCD serves approximately 45,000 students through three campuses: Cañada College in Redwood City, College of San Mateo, and Skyline College in San Bruno.

The total cost of enrollment – including tuition, fees, books, technology, transportation, food, rent and other living expenses – can exceed $15,000 per year for community college students.

SMCCCD’s Promise Scholars Program supports students through the completion of their post-secondary pathways. The program provides students with multi-year tuition support, individualized counseling support, textbook vouchers, and food and transportation incentives through the completion of their degree or certificate.

**Unfortunately, California law currently prevents local community college districts from using their various local revenues to offset tuition and expenses for students. For example, SMCCCD can only fund 2,000 of the 6,000 eligible students for its Promise Scholars Program even though they have the local revenue to provide financial assistance for all eligible students.**

Without the flexibility to use local funds, SMCCCD is unable to supplement the Promise Scholars program in its goal of making meaningful headway in supporting underserved communities and creating life-changing impacts on students.

**By providing greater flexibility to the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD) to use their existing local revenues to reduce costs for students furthering their education, SB 893 will make college free or more affordable for local students without financially impacting the state.**

SB 893 benefits the students, the district, and the state. By allowing SMCCCD to use local funds to support students’ basic needs and to have the flexibility to charge less than the currently required state fee rate of $46 per credit unit (including charging $0), SMCCCD can make attending college less financially burdensome for students in need of assistance. Further, by permitting SMCCCD to supplement the California Promise Program with local funds, the bill will increase the number of students eligible to participate in the program without any additional cost to the state.

SB 893 includes important safeguards including:

* The SMCCCD Board must establish a framework to determine eligibility and students must demonstrate financial need.
* Students must reside in San Mateo County to prevent competition with neighboring districts.
* SMCCCD must publicly provide financial impact information showing that they have the funds to reduce fees for additional students and the District is prohibited from receiving reimbursement from the state.

SB 893’s flexibility to use unrestricted general fund dollars to support students will have significant impacts throughout the community and will allow the district to bridge inequities throughout San Mateo County by making college more accessible and affordable for students, particularly those in marginalized and underrepresented communities.

Sincerely,