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Hurtado Introduces Bills to Fight Poverty and Improve Healthcare Access

SACRAMENTO, CA - Senator Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger) today reintroduced a pair of bills that will help curb chronic poverty, put people back to work and increase access to health care in Central Valley rural communities and beyond.

“The pandemic has only made the long-term economic and health disparities in the Central Valley much worse,” Senator Hurtado said. “These two bills provide targeted support and opportunities to people who have also been historically left out of opportunities for a better life but are building their dreams and committing themselves to make our communities healthy and safe – such as foster youth and farmworkers. These bills represent a good start for communities that are already behind.”

The two bills are:

SB 40 creates the California Medicine Scholars Program. This bill is a response to the critical shortage of primary care clinicians in the Central Valley and other poorer, rural regions where people have less access to health insurance. SB 40 would grow the medical provider pool in these regions by formalizing a pre-med pathway from the California Community Colleges system to medical schools. The bill would also establish four “Regional Hubs of Health Care Opportunity” that would provide regional students of color with support such as internships, scholarships and opportunities to shadow medical professionals – all within poorer, rural regions where medical help is needed the most.

“As a Latina future physician you are more familiar with your own community. You know how it feels being unheard, advocating for what is right in the medical profession and using my voice and values to speak for every family that has to make choices for a loved one,” said Cristina Perez, student at University of California, Riverside pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Science Biology. “Having a woman of color will help break the chain of inequality in the medical profession and bring hope, integrity, and empathy for every patient and loved one.”

SB 61 creates the Lifting Children and Families Out of Poverty Workforce Training Program. This bill strengthens workforce-training programs by providing critical support for participants that will enable them to stay in the programs and complete workforce training. SB 61 provides \$50 million in grants to local workforce development boards, community colleges and other entities to pay for services such childcare and transportation for participants in workforce training programs. Also creates training programs for farmworkers and foster youth.

“Many of us have wanted to go back to school but the lack of child care and support makes it very difficult,” said Alma Moreno, a farmworker from Sanger, Calif. “It’s very difficult to take night classes when you don’t have transportation or resources. We would like to have a brighter future and fight child poverty in California.”

About Senator Melissa Hurtado

Senator Melissa Hurtado represents the 14th Senate District, which includes cities in Fresno, Kern, Kings and Tulare counties. She is the youngest woman ever elected to the California

State Senate and a product of immigrant parents. She fights for small, disadvantaged farmworker communities in rural California. Senator Hurtado focuses on rural community issues that often go unheard — access to clean air and water, food insecurity and poverty, inequities in environmental policies, agriculture and access to health care.

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