

Big Retreat on California's SB 1146, but Trouble May Still Loom

California State Sen. Ricardo Lara reportedly decided to amend the wording of the bill he is sponsoring, SB 1146, so that students attending private colleges and universities with profession-of-faith requirements and religious codes of conduct won't automatically lose the ability to qualify for state scholarships; instead, the revised bill requires the schools to disclose their policies and report any expulsions under them to the government.

Lara says he will continue examining the issue and may bring back the terms of the original bill next year.

"Students shouldn't have to forfeit critical financial aid programs in order to attend the religious college of their choice. And the government shouldn't punish faith-based institutions of higher education for forming religious communities around shared religious beliefs," Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Gregory S. Baylor says.

"The modifications to SB 1146 eliminate its most damaging parts, but those may well return in the next legislative session. Supporters of religious liberty, educational opportunity and freedom of choice must remain vigilant and oppose any legislation that undermines these indispensable freedoms."