

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 26, 2025

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 9, 2025

AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 23, 2025

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 8, 2025

SENATE BILL

No. 437

Introduced by Senator Weber Pierson

(Coauthors: Senators Richardson and Smallwood-Cuevas)

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Bonta, Bryan, Elhawary, Gipson,
Jackson, McKinnor, Sharp-Collins, and Wilson)

February 18, 2025

An act to add Chapter 4.8 (commencing with Section 8308) to Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code, relating to postsecondary education, and making an appropriation therefor.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 437, as amended, Weber Pierson. California State University: claim eligibility: genealogy and descendancy.

Existing law establishes the California State University, under the administration of the Trustees of the California State University, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in the state. Existing law requires the trustees to control and expend all money appropriated for the support and maintenance of the university.

Former law, until July 1, 2023, established the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States (Task Force).

Former law required the Task Force, among other things, to identify, compile, and synthesize the relevant corpus of evidentiary

documentation of the institution of slavery that existed within the United States and the colonies, as specified, and to recommend the form of compensation that should be awarded, the instrumentalities through which it should be awarded, and who should be eligible for this compensation.

This bill would authorize the use of up to \$6,000,000, as specified, for the purpose of enabling the California State University to conduct research in furtherance of the recommendations of the Task Force, thereby making an appropriation. The bill would authorize the California State University to partner with other universities or nonprofit institutions in furtherance of the bill. The bill would require, before the start of each fiscal year, the California State University to consult with the California Legislative Black Caucus to propose a list of research components to be addressed through the appropriation, as provided.

This bill would require the California State University to explore options to determine how to confirm an individual's status as a ~~descendant~~ *descendant of an enslaved person, as defined*. The bill would also require the California State University to establish a process for conducting or verifying genealogical research ~~to confirm eligibility for reparative claims~~ *for the purpose of confirming an individual's status as a descendant of an enslaved person for eligibility for reparative claims* on or before the start of the 2029–30 academic year and to commence the work of establishing the process on or before the start of the 2026–27 academic year. The bill would authorize the funding described above to be used to support student participation in support of this goal. The bill would require the California State University, on or before October 1 of each year and until funding is exhausted, to submit to the Legislature and Governor a report with a status update of pending research projects, and any research projects that have been completed within the prior year. The bill would require the final report to include research findings, recommendations with options, and timelines for statewide implementation, including costs, developed pursuant to these provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: yes. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Chapter 4.8 (commencing with Section 8308) is
- 2 added to Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code, to read:

CHAPTER 4.8. CLAIM ELIGIBILITY BASED ON GENEALOGY AND
DESCENDANCY

8308. (a) Up to six million dollars (\$6,000,000) of the appropriation provided in Section 15.80 of the Budget Act of 2024 (Chs. 22, 35, and 994, Stats. 2024) may be used for the purpose of enabling the California State University to conduct research in furtherance of the recommendations of the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States as established under former Section 8301.1, added by Section 1 of Chapter 319 of the Statutes of 2020. The California State University may partner with other universities or nonprofit institutions in furtherance of this section.

(b) The California State University shall explore options to determine how to confirm an individual's status as a ~~descendant~~. *descendant of an enslaved person*. The California State University shall also establish a process for conducting or verifying genealogical research ~~to confirm eligibility for reparative claims for the purpose of confirming an individual's status as a descendant of an enslaved person for eligibility for reparative claims~~ on or before the start of the 2029–30 academic year and commence the work of establishing the process on or before the start of the 2026–27 academic year. Funding from subdivision (a) may be used to support student participation in support of this goal.

(c) Before the start of each fiscal year, the California State University shall consult with the California Legislative Black Caucus to propose a list of research components to be addressed through the appropriation in subdivision (a) and each year until funding is exhausted.

(d) (1) Notwithstanding Section 10231.5, the California State University shall, on or before October 1 of each year and until funding from subdivision (a) is exhausted, submit to the Legislature and Governor a report with a status update of pending research projects, and any research projects that have been completed within the prior year. The final report shall include research findings, recommendations with options, and timelines for statewide implementation, including costs, developed pursuant to this section.

1 (2) A report submitted pursuant to this subdivision shall be
2 submitted in compliance with Section 9795.

3 (e) For purposes of this section, “descendant of an enslaved
4 person” means an individual who can establish direct lineage to
5 a person who, before 1900, was subjected to American chattel
6 slavery and meets at least one of the following criteria:

7 (1) Was emancipated through legal or extralegal means,
8 including self-purchase, manumission, legislative action, military
9 service, or judicial ruling.

10 (2) Obtained freedom through gradual abolition statutes or
11 constitutional amendments.

12 (3) Was classified as a fugitive from bondage under federal or
13 state law.

14 (4) Was deemed contraband by military authorities.

15 (5) Rendered military or civic service while subject to legal
16 restrictions based on ancestry historically associated with slavery.