

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (KBAK/KBFX) — In an effort to meet the most urgent local workforce needs, Bakersfield College has pushed for the state Senate bill that would bring bachelor's degree programs to community colleges.

In Kern County, that need is for nurses.

Carol Webb and her son are currently enrolled in the nursing program at Bakersfield College.

"I would love for it to come here, I would love for my son to do it, to become even a nurse practitioner, I think that would be awesome. It would give a lot more advantages to students who think they want to do it but yet can't afford it," said Webb.

Under SB 850, select two-year colleges could grant four-year degrees. The bill is still in the preliminary stages, but the push is that the bachelor's degree would cost less than if earned at a Cal State or University of California campus.

"The students are saying they really need this. So many of our students are single parents, they are working while they're in the program. They're doing whatever they can to get through," said Bakersfield College spokeswoman Amber Chiang.

Chiang continues that hospitals and medical facilities around the county have expressed a need for more nurses, which is why the college chose nursing as the possible four-year degree.

Eric Jones, a Bakersfield College student who wants to be a pediatrician, said, "As long as the community works together, I believe we can make this town a whole lot better. Education is the key."

A higher education could mean higher pay, and Jones presses, that's good news for students.

Critics of the measure press that a four-year degree option at two-year campuses would change the purpose of community colleges. They proposed the money should be sent existing Cal State and UC programs to expand the curriculum there.