

For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

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**SAN FRANCISCO TAKES ANOTHER BIG STEP TOWARD MAKING
SAN FRANCISCO THE FIRST CITY TO MAKE HIGHER EDUCATION FREE**

In San Francisco, people seeking higher education may receive respite from student debt sooner than the rest of the nation: local voters will have a chance to approve a 0.25% increase to the real estate transfer tax which is paid when a high-end building is sold for \$5 million or more. This measure is projected to raise an average of \$44 million annually in new revenue, more than three times the amount needed for the City to make City College tuition-free.

Supporters of the proposition had a victory today when the Board of Supervisors' Budget and Finance Committee (Katy Tang, Mark Farrell, and Norman Yee) voted unanimously to support legislation creating a special fund that will serve as a financial vessel to hold the resources needed to make San Francisco City College free again by 2017. The full Board will now vote on the legislation on September 27, 2016.

Supervisor Kim, who authored the Free City legislative package, said, "The difference between what you can earn if you graduate with a degree from City College or if you graduate with only a high school degree is almost \$1000 a month. In the Bay Area where we see an increasing economic gap between the ultrarich and the rest of us, we can and we should make those extra dollars a reality for the families and households that are struggling to make it. We can and we should make higher education free because we know that's the way to lift more people to the middle class and beyond."

CCSF serves more than 60,000 students, including parents, recent high school graduates, seniors, caregivers, and many of San Francisco's low-income students pursuing their dreams of higher education and workforce skill development. "This is groundbreaking, game-changing legislation. We've worked with so many groups all across the City on this idea. It's good for our economy, for our communities, for our college, and for the movement to return all our community colleges across the country to the students who need this access so much. This is for all San Franciscans, of all ages, with all sorts of educational goals," stated Alisa Messer, English instructor at CCSF and AFT 2121's Political Director.

While the majority of CCSF students qualify for financial aid, in an era of skyrocketing student debt in one of the most expensive cities in the world, students often are forced to face choices between enrollment and rent, between textbooks and food on the table. Under the Free City plan, students enrolled in credit courses will qualify for either a waiver of enrollment fees OR for up to \$1,000 of additional assistance to buy class materials such as books, which are often more expensive than the course itself. ###