



# Experience Doesn't Pay the Bills in California

The Hidden Costs of Unpaid Internships and Why Paid  
Internships are a Must in the California Legislature

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February 2, 2021



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## Executive Summary

This report details the importance of paid internships as a gateway to the contemporary job market; the issues created by unpaid internships specifically in California; and a list of who pays and does not pay their interns in the California State Assembly and California State Senate.

For the context of this study, a “paid internship” is defined as one that offers a monetary stipend or hourly pay for work performed, and is listed on public payroll records.

### Cost of Living:


- The average rent in California’s state capital, Sacramento, is [over \\$1,400](#) and [rose 69 percent between 2010 and 2019](#).
- The cost of living in Sacramento is [17 percent higher than the national average](#).
- The cost of housing in Sacramento is [37 percent above the national average](#).

### Internships:

- During a paid summer internship, which lasts between 10 to 12 weeks in the US, students can expect to earn an average of about [\\$3,400](#).
- When accounting for housing, food, and transportation, a paid internship can cost around [\\$6,000](#). When factoring in tuition to earn academic credit as compensation — instead of money — unpaid internships can cost students up to [\\$13,000](#).
- Most interns [lose money](#), especially unpaid interns.
- The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) [2019 Student Survey](#) found students who had paid internship experience got nearly 50 percent more job offers, compared to those who interned for free or had no internship.

### State Legislature:

- Based on payroll reports from the California State Assembly, released in [February 2019](#), [May 2019](#), and [August 2019](#), 10 percent (8 out of 80) of Assembly members paid their interns.
- Based on a [May 2019](#) payroll report, no one in the California State Senate used funds from their budgets to pay their interns.
- In the 2021 State Assembly, 57 percent (46 out of 80) of Assembly members did not have internship information accessible on their websites.

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- In the 2021 State Senate, 77 percent (30 out of 39)<sup>1</sup> of Senators did not have internship information accessible on their websites.
  - Results were obtained by analyzing online public payroll records, analyzing requested records, and viewing each member’s government website.
  - Most offices with internship information available online use the following phrasing: “Interns will gain valuable education and work experience by fully participating in agreed-upon hours of work. All internship work is voluntary, and students will not receive any monetary compensation.”
  - California is [the most diverse state in the country](#), but most members of the state’s legislature have been [white and male](#).

## ***The Harmful Impacts of Unpaid Internships in the California Legislature***

Legislative internships are coveted because they provide networking opportunities, experience in public service, and a foray into politics. But for many, that invaluable experience cannot make up for the fear and uncertainty that arise with their cost.

Unfortunately, experience does not pay for food, rent, or transportation costs associated with an internship. There may also be relocation fees if the student is coming from out of state or county, as well as added course fees if the intern is receiving college credit instead of monetary compensation.


### **Unpaid internships: An expensive proposition**

Paid interns can expect to earn an average of about [\\$3,400](#) over the course of their internship. But the associated additional costs—which average around [\\$6,000](#) for paid interns and nearly [\\$13,000](#) for unpaid interns earning college credit — often deter qualified candidates from accepting positions that can greatly benefit their future, thereby limiting their opportunities. In fact, most interns [lose money](#), especially those who are unpaid.

In a state as competitive as California, which has [the highest number of college graduates in the country](#), young people take every opportunity to make themselves viable candidates for

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<sup>1</sup> There are 40 seats in the California State Senate. As of this writing, one seat in the California State Senate remains vacant.



their intended job market. Since the 2008 recession, [over 80 percent of first-time freshmen](#) have chosen to attend college to get a better job.

At the same time, employers across the country and in all industries have prioritized internships as a valuable vehicle for talent acquisition. The National Association for Colleges and Employers (NACE) [2017 Student Survey](#) found over 6 in 10 employers preferred hiring candidates with relevant work experience, and over half of employers wanted work experience to come from internships.

In response to this, students have rushed to attain the internship experience that will secure them employment. As such, the number of students participating in internships has more than tripled over the last 27 years. By 2019, that number had risen to almost [60 percent](#). But young people should not have to choose between paying their bills and gaining critical work experience. The average rent in California's state capital, Sacramento, is [over \\$1,400](#) and [rose 69 percent between 2010 and 2019](#), thus having a greater impact on students who move here for their internships.


Unfortunately, compared to other states, California has the [third-highest cost of living index](#). In Sacramento, the cost of living is [17 percent higher than the national average](#) and housing costs are [37 percent above the national average](#). So, many California State Legislature interns — most of whom currently go unpaid — are likely to face higher costs and incur more debt while interning.

## **Unpaid internships: Increasing economic inequality**

Those most likely to face barriers posed by unpaid internships are low-income students — often students of color — many of whom cannot afford to work for free. A [2018 Georgetown Center report](#) noted there were 6 million low-income students working while pursuing post-secondary education in the US, where 1.1 million were Black and 1.5 million were Latinx.

[A closer look](#) at NACE's 2019 Student Survey found only 6 percent of Black students and less than 8 percent of Latinx students had paid internships, compared to 74 percent of white students. The same [NACE staff report](#) also noted Black students were more likely to be unpaid interns and Latinx students were more likely to have never interned at all.

California is [the country's most diverse state](#) and has [the wealthiest economy in the nation](#). A lack of paid internships for minority students are a blemish on the state's reputation. While there is no demographic data on interns in the California State Legislature, low-income



students are less likely to be able to afford an unpaid internship, and Black and Latinx families in California are [more likely to be lower income](#). Therefore, unpaid internships in the California Legislature have a greater economic impact on minority students.

Rather than gain meaningful internship experience, the aforementioned [2018 Georgetown Center report](#) found students from low-income backgrounds are more likely to work jobs that: limit their long-term career goals; jeopardize their abilities to attain the skills to be job-ready; prevent them from expanding their professional network; and negatively impact their overall educational performance. Making State Legislature internships paid would enable more low-income and students of color to participate without working multiple jobs or compromising their studies.


## **Paid internships: A winning proposition for California**

We cannot allow the necessity of an internship to prevent young adults from accomplishing their goals, especially when those young adults bring unique and diverse perspectives to an often homogenous workforce. Most members of the California State Legislature have been [white and male](#); meanwhile, [Asian women and Latinxs have historically been underrepresented](#). This creates a challenge for students of color since [employers hire people who are skilled and culturally similar to them](#).

Additionally, paid internships lead to a more diverse pool of applicants and staffers, since [legislative offices often serve as talent pools](#) for other government officials or government agencies. Making State Legislature internships paid would enable more low-income students to apply and secure those roles, which in turn would allow for a more diverse pool of potential public servants.

The benefits of paid internships go beyond better wages, greater representation, and better opportunities though. Paid internships also lead to *more* opportunities. NACE's [2019 Student Survey](#) found students who had paid internship experience got nearly 50 percent more job offers, compared to those who interned for free or had no internship. Thus, paying California State Legislature interns means more young people would graduate ready to enter the job market and able to contribute to the state's economy.

The concept of paid internship programs in State Legislatures is nothing new. In fact, Arizona, Indiana, Maryland, New York, and Connecticut are just a few examples of states whose legislatures pay their interns. In Indiana, the Democratic and Republican caucuses



have programs to pay interns a biweekly stipend of \$770. If a state such as Indiana, which largely believes in limited government spending, invests in its interns, there's no excuse for California not to do the same.

Moreover, federal funds are allocated to pay interns in member offices of the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as in district offices. Before 2017, the majority of congressional internships were unpaid. That changed, thanks to Pay Our Interns' 2017 report, "[Experience Doesn't Pay the Bills](#)." To date, Congress has appropriated \$48 million to compensate their interns. This was accomplished with broad bipartisan support.

Given that robust programs exist to pay interns in many states and at the federal level, there is every reason for California to join them. Setting aside money, by law, to pay stipends to interns is a worthy investment in the next generation of leaders. And it's only right to make it possible for all students, no matter their family income, to take advantage of such an opportunity.


## ***Summary of California Legislature Internships Research***

### **State of Internships in the Legislature**

In 2019, only **10 percent (8 out of 80) of the California State Assembly paid their interns**. This is based on the California State Assembly Staff Salary records from [February 2019](#), [May 2019](#), and [August 2019](#), where 12 individuals on the information sheet had "intern" in their title.

Meanwhile, **no one in the California State Senate used funds from their budgets to pay their interns**. This is based on the California State Senate Payroll records from [May 2019](#), available on the Senate website. Specifically, no one on the payroll information sheet had "intern" in their title. We also requested records through the California Research Bureau because we were told, without a records request, we would have to wait until their yearly release.

Obtaining records for both chambers proved challenging. As we contacted legislative offices about the transparency of the information around intern salaries, a few offices made it clear the information was unlikely to be available online. Moreover, the aforementioned results do



not include unpaid interns. That is, there is no publicly available data on the number of unpaid interns hired in either chamber of the State Legislature.

## State of Online Internship Postings on Legislators' Websites

In the State Assembly, 43 percent (34 out of 80) of Assemblymembers had internship information accessible on their website. Meanwhile, only 23 percent (9 out of 39)<sup>2</sup> of State Senators had internship information accessible on their websites. Of those with information available, many did not explicitly state the type of compensation interns would receive.

This lack of transparency creates a barrier for applicants who may not be able to take an unpaid internship. It can also create additional stress for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who must weigh the uncertainty of their compensation with the necessary job experience for their career path.

Unpaid interns are often taken advantage of in the workplace, and have limited resources or support available because unpaid internships are largely unregulated. Moreover, unpaid interns are often kept for longer periods of time and saddled with additional tasks and assignments because employers don't have to financially compensate them for their time or labor. In reality, the expectations and job experience of an unpaid intern are comparable to those of an entry-level employee. Both positions have a high workload because they are the lowest-paid workers, leading to feelings of burnout as interns become overworked.

Despite these workplace disadvantages, every year millions of young people take on the burden of unpaid internships to keep up with a growing workforce. After all, lack of professional experience on a resume limits future job prospects.

In a field like government or public policy, a lack of network can also be a barrier. That is why internships — especially paid internships — and the career pathways they create are essential to young professionals.

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<sup>2</sup> There are 40 seats in the California State Senate. As of this writing, one seat in the California State Senate remains vacant.





## ***Assembly Members Who Paid (Based on 2019 Records)***

Blanca E.	Rubio	Paid	CA-48	Democrat
Christina	Garcia	Paid	CA-58	Democrat
Mike	Gipson	Paid	CA-65	Democrat
Patrick	O'Donnell	Paid	CA-70	Democrat
Philip Y.	Ting	Paid	CA-19	Democrat
Rudy	Salas, Jr.	Paid	CA-32	Democrat
Todd	Gloria	Paid	CA-78	Democrat

Bill	Brough	Paid	CA-73	Republican
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## ***Assembly Members Who Didn't Pay (Based on 2019 Records)***

Adam	Grayson	Unpaid	CA-21	Democrat
Adrin	Nazarian	Unpaid	CA-46	Democrat
Al	Muratsuchi	Unpaid	CA-66	Democrat
Alex	Lee	Unpaid	CA-25	Democrat
Anthony	Rendon	Unpaid	CA-63	Democrat
Ash	Kalra	Unpaid	CA-27	Democrat
Autumn R.	Burke	Unpaid	CA-62	Democrat
Bill	Quirk	Unpaid	CA-20	Democrat
Brian	Maienschein	Unpaid	CA-77	Democrat
Buffy	Wicks	Unpaid	CA-15	Democrat
Carlos	Villapudua	Unpaid	CA-13	Democrat
Cecilia	Aguiar-Curry	Unpaid	CA-04	Democrat
Chris R.	Holden	Unpaid	CA-41	Democrat
Christopher M.	Ward	Unpaid	CA-78	Democrat
Cottie	Petrie-Norris	Unpaid	CA-74	Democrat
David	Chiu	Unpaid	CA-17	Democrat
Ed	Chau	Unpaid	CA-49	Democrat
Eduardo	Garcia	Unpaid	CA-56	Democrat
Eloise	Reyes	Unpaid	CA-47	Democrat
Evan	Low	Unpaid	CA-28	Democrat
Freddie	Rodriguez	Unpaid	CA-52	Democrat
Jacqui	Irwin	Unpaid	CA-44	Democrat
James C.	Ramos	Unpaid	CA-40	Democrat
Jesse	Gabriel	Unpaid	CA-45	Democrat
Jim	Cooper	Unpaid	CA-09	Democrat
Jim	Frazier	Unpaid	CA-11	Democrat
Jim	Wood	Unpaid	CA-02	Democrat
Joaquin	Arambula	Unpaid	CA-31	Democrat
Jose	Medina	Unpaid	CA-61	Democrat



Ken	Cooley	Unpaid	CA-08	Democrat
Kevin	McCarty	Unpaid	CA-07	Democrat
Kevin	Mullin	Unpaid	CA-22	Democrat
Laura	Friedman	Unpaid	CA-43	Democrat
Lisa	Calderon	Unpaid	CA-57	Democrat
Lorena	Gonzalez	Unpaid	CA-80	Democrat
Luz M.	Rivas	Unpaid	CA-39	Democrat
Marc	Berman	Unpaid	CA-24	Democrat
Marc	Levine	Unpaid	CA-10	Democrat
Marie	Waldron	Unpaid	CA-75	Democrat
Mark	Stone	Unpaid	CA-29	Democrat
Megan	Dahle	Unpaid	CA-01	Democrat
Miguel	Santiago	Unpaid	CA-53	Democrat
Rebecca	Bauer-Kahan	Unpaid	CA-16	Democrat
Reginald B.	Jones-Sawyer, Sr.	Unpaid	CA-59	Democrat
Richard	Bloom	Unpaid	CA-50	Democrat
Rob	Bonta	Unpaid	CA-18	Democrat
Robert	Rivas	Unpaid	CA-30	Democrat
Sabrina	Cervantes	Unpaid	CA-60	Democrat
Sharon	Quirk-Silva	Unpaid	CA-65	Democrat
Shirley N.	Weber	Unpaid	CA-79	Democrat
Steve	Bennett	Unpaid	CA-37	Democrat
Sydney	Kamlager	Unpaid	CA-54	Democrat
Tasha	Boerner Horvath	Unpaid	CA-76	Democrat
Timothy	Grayson	Unpaid	CA-14	Democrat
Tom	Daly	Unpaid	CA-69	Democrat
Wendy	Carrillo	Unpaid	CA-51	Democrat

Chad	Mayes	Unpaid	CA-42	Independent
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Devon	Mathis	Unpaid	CA-26	Republican
Frank	Bigelow	Unpaid	CA-5	Republican



Heath	Flora	Unpaid	CA-12	Republican
James	Gallagher	Unpaid	CA-03	Republican
Janet	Nguyen	Unpaid	CA-72	Republican
Jim	Patterson	Unpaid	CA-23	Republican
Jordan	Cunningham	Unpaid	CA-35	Republican
Kelly	Seyarto	Unpaid	CA-67	Republican
Kevin	Kiley	Unpaid	CA-06	Republican
Laurie	Davies	Unpaid	CA-73	Republican
Phillip	Chen	Unpaid	CA-55	Republican
Randy	Voepel	Unpaid	CA-71	Republican
Steven S.	Choi	Unpaid	CA-68	Republican
Suzette	Martinez Valladares	Unpaid	CA-38	Republican
Thurston "Smitty"	Smith	Unpaid	CA-33	Republican
Tom	Lackey	Unpaid	CA-36	Republican
Vince	Fong	Unpaid	CA-34	Republican



***Senate Members Who Paid (Based on 2019 records)***

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<sup>3</sup> According to 2019 records, no California State Senators paid their interns.

## Senate Members Who Didn't Pay (Based on 2019 records)

Anna M.	Caballero	CA-12	Unpaid	Democrat
Anthony J.	Portatino	CA-25	Unpaid	Democrat
Ben	Hueso	CA-40	Unpaid	Democrat
Benjamin	Allen	CA-28	Unpaid	Democrat
Bill	Dodd	CA-03	Unpaid	Democrat
Bob	Archuleta	CA-32	Unpaid	Democrat
Bob	Wieckowski	CA-10	Unpaid	Democrat
Connie M.	Leyva	CA-20	Unpaid	Democrat
Dave	Cortese	CA-15	Unpaid	Democrat
Dave	Min	CA-37	Unpaid	Democrat
Henry I.	Stern	CA-27	Unpaid	Democrat
John	Laird	CA-17	Unpaid	Democrat
Josh	Becker	CA-13	Unpaid	Democrat
Josh	Newman	CA-29	Unpaid	Democrat
Lena A.	Gonzalez	CA-33	Unpaid	Democrat
María Elena	Durazo	CA-24	Unpaid	Democrat
Melissa	Hurtado	CA-14	Unpaid	Democrat
Mike	McGuire	CA-02	Unpaid	Democrat
Monique	Limón	CA-19	Unpaid	Democrat
Nancy	Skinner	CA-09	Unpaid	Democrat
Richard D.	Roth	CA-31	Unpaid	Democrat



Richard	Pan	CA-06	Unpaid	Democrat
Robert M.	Hertzberg	CA-18	Unpaid	Democrat
Scott D.	Wiener	CA-11	Unpaid	Democrat
Steven	Bradford	CA-35	Unpaid	Democrat
Steven M.	Glazer	CA-07	Unpaid	Democrat
Susan	Rubio	CA-22	Unpaid	Democrat
Susan Talmantes	Eggman	CA-05	Unpaid	Democrat
Thomas J.	Umberg	CA-34	Unpaid	Democrat
Toni G.	Atkins	CA-39	Unpaid	Democrat

Andreas	Borgeras	CA-8	Unpaid	Republican
Brian	Dahle	CA-01	Unpaid	Republican
Brian W.	Jones	CA-38	Unpaid	Republican
Melissa A.	Melendez	CA-28	Unpaid	Republican
Patricia C.	Bates	CA-36	Unpaid	Republican
Rosilicie Ochoa	Bogh	CA-23	Unpaid	Republican
Scott	Wilk	CA-21	Unpaid	Republican
Shannon	Grove	CA-16	Unpaid	Republican




## Recommendations

- **Increase Transparency Around Internship Availability for the California State Assembly and California State Senate:** In 2021, over half of Assemblymembers' and roughly three-quarters of Senators' websites did not have internship information. This can create barriers for young professionals—who are new to the job market and looking for the next step in their career—because the information is not available. The Democratic and Republican caucuses can easily fix these issues by offering updated website templates to their members, which should include clearly stated parameters around availability, expectations, and compensation of internship positions.
- **Clearly Disclose Internship Compensation:** Even those legislators' websites that included internship information, omitted information about intern compensation. Whether an internship is monetarily compensated should be clearly stated. Students have a right to know if internships are paid or not before applying because many students cannot afford to take on unpaid labor. A short sentence on the type of compensation awarded (e.g. scholarship, stipend, hourly, etc.) for an internship would save time for potential interns, as well as for the staff who would have to field calls about pay.
- **Allocate Legislative Funds for a Paid Internship Program:** Many paid internships within the Legislature are funded by third-party organizations with limited spots, such as the [Capital Fellows Programs](#). While these third-parties provide the necessary opportunities for some, there is still a large group of interns who are not compensated. Moreover, some programs require applicants to have a bachelor's degree. Allocating legislative funds for a paid internship program would allow community college students as well as freshmen and sophomores at four-year institutions the opportunity to gain valuable legislative experience while opening the doors to future employment.

That is why our vital recommendation is to ensure the January 2021 budget allocates a minimum of \$4.8 million for California State Legislature offices to offer paid internships. The allotted funds would allow each of the 120 Legislative offices to receive approximately \$40,000 a year to pay their Spring, Summer, and Fall interns. This includes compensation for up to three interns per semester or academic term (or nine a year), working at \$15 an hour, 20-25 hours a week, for 12 weeks. Individual members can develop their own compensation packages based on their internship





calendar. When voters passed Prop 140, it was intended to set term limits for legislators and limit how much legislators could spend on operations and staff salaries. However, placing caps on legislative office budgets limits the number of staff offices can hire. The unfortunate, and perhaps unintended consequence of this, is that Prop 140 also limits offices' abilities to hire and pay interns, who are often the last ones hired and the ones who earn the least.

- **Create a System of Resources and Support for Legislative Interns:** Interns are often at a disadvantage in the workplace because [their lack of employment contract leaves them vulnerable](#) to mistreatment. This can range from harassment in the workplace to being asked to work long hours. Currently, interns have limited resources to ensure their employers are meeting basic standards for creating a safe and equitable workplace. The closest measures in place for preventing such harassment are in [Assembly Bill No. 1443](#), which prohibits the harassment of unpaid interns or participants of another limited duration program. While this is a great first step, we believe the law could be improved by creating a more centralized system of resources for legislative interns that would allow them to vocalize their concerns and find the support needed to ensure they are respected in the workplace.
- **Ensure funds go to those who truly need them:** Since these funds will be limited, legislative offices should create a system to ensure those who benefit from the funds are students who demonstrate financial need. Such a system could request proof that a student is Pell Grant eligible, eligible for federal work study, receives federal or state student aid, like Cal Grants, or that their expected family contribution is zero. By establishing this system, offices ensure funds for paid internships go to students from low-income backgrounds first, as they are the ones who will benefit the most from this initiative.



## Conclusion

Internships can create new career and networking opportunities for students. Despite the high high cost of internships, students feel obligated to participate because they have become a prerequisite in today's job market.

Unpaid internships in the California State Legislature raise issues of social and economic injustice. They pose a barrier to many qualified applicants from low-income backgrounds. It leaves them out of the legislative process and limits their access to future opportunities in public service and the workforce. This has long-term repercussions since few students can afford to take on unpaid work. Moreover, this creates a diversity issue in California since most low-income students are Black or Latinx.

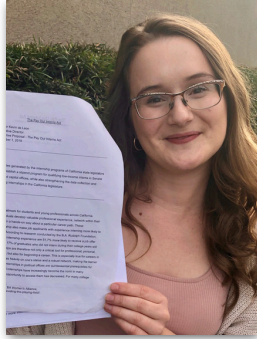
Our report's findings illustrate the importance of creating a system of paid legislative internships to ensure every student has an equal opportunity to participate in these experiences. Using the findings from our report, members of the California Legislature have the chance to create long-lasting change for existing internship programs, and for the diversity of the California government.

Paid internships allow for more equitable opportunities. By putting into practice our recommendations, the California Legislature would create a larger, more diverse pool of students able to take on legislative internships, accurately representing the state's diversity, and would allow more students to advance their careers in public service. Change for many communities comes from representation in positions of power. By increasing opportunities for marginalized communities, the legislature is ensuring members of all communities, and the issues they face, have a chance to be heard.

After all, when [the state where the internet first started](#) has over a third of legislators without internships listed on their websites, there's a problem. When [the most diverse state in the country](#) has mostly [white legislators](#), there's a problem. When [the fifth largest world economy](#) has only 8 out of 120 legislators pay their interns, there's a problem.

When considering internships, the most technologically savvy state in the country, the most diverse state in the country, and the most prosperous state in the country should never ask, "Can we have unpaid internships?" Instead, the question legislators ought to lead with is, "Why do we *still* have unpaid internships?"

## Acknowledgments



In 2019, Pay Our Interns was inspired by Victoria Pfau, an unpaid intern in the California State Legislature. As part of a college midterm in public policy, Pfau chose to tackle issues around unpaid internships, based on her own experiences. With our guidance, Pfau drafted sample legislation called, "The Pay Our Interns Act: Investing in California's Future Leaders." Her writing inspired us to launch efforts for a paid internship program in the California State Legislature.

We would like to thank the entire [Pay Our Interns](#) team for their continued support of our mission: Carlos Mark Vera, Mario Sanguinet, Rose Lopez, Aalayah Eastmond, Shontrice Barnes, Brittney Jimenez-Bayardo, Sadé Ratliff, Arielle Geismar, Lizbeth Luevano, Mark Antonio Williams, Avalon Fenster, Vaishu Jawahar, Catherine Murphy, Tiffany Win, and Danielle Germain. We would like to thank Mazen Halabi for their amazing graphics.

We would also like to thank the [Greenlining Institute](#) for partnering with us on this initiative to ensure the California Statehouse is accessible to all. We are especially thankful to Muhammad Tarek Alameldin, a Greenlining Institute 2020-2021 Economic Equity Fellow and previous intern & Regional Director at Pay Our Interns; and to Adam Briones, Economic Equity Director.

We would also like to thank our Board Members, Guillermo Creamer, Adele McClure, Antonio Tijerino, Colin Rogero, Jonathan Muniz, and Veronica Morales for their support of our initiatives.

Special thanks to Catherine Murphy, who worked collecting internship data within the California Legislature, and to Rose Lopez, who copyedited the report.



## About the Authors

**Brittney Jimenez-Bayardo** is a Research Fellow at Pay Our Interns and a former Congressional Intern. She holds a bachelor's in Chicano/Latino Studies from the University of California, Irvine where she was able to participate in the University of California, D.C. Program. Through this program, she experienced the importance of having an internship, while juggling the economic impact of having an unpaid internship. Currently, she is a Chicana and Chicano Studies master's student at California State University, Northridge where her work focuses on understanding the diverse avenues of youth community organizing.

**Catherine Murphy** is a Research Fellow at Pay Our Interns and a former intern in the California State Assembly. She's a graduate of the University of San Francisco, where she experienced firsthand the challenges of being a low-income student at a school with far wealthier peers. She's a dedicated advocate for ending unpaid internships because she's had multiple and knows how they harm low-income students.

**Mario Sanguinet** is a Research Specialist for Pay Our Interns. His work focuses on the inequities in the internship economy and finding ways to address them. He has worked on local economic development issues like Smart Cities, Urban Agriculture, and San Diego's Creative Economy. He also lectures in interpersonal and oral communication at Southwestern College. He holds a master's and bachelor's in Communication from San Diego State University. He is, unsurprisingly, good at talking. A lot.

**Carlos Mark Vera** is the Co-Founder and current Executive Director of Pay Our Interns. Originally from Colombia, Carlos was raised in California, but moved to Washington, D.C. to attend American University. While at AU, Carlos was an unpaid intern at the White House, the European Parliament, and the House of Representatives. He knows firsthand the struggles of trying to survive while interning for free. Under his leadership, Pay Our Interns successfully convinced Congress to pass more than \$31 million in funding for interns and has helped nonprofits, companies, and presidential campaigns create their internship programs.

Carlos' efforts on Capitol Hill led him to be named a Forbes 30 Under 30 Honoree, Echoing Green Fellow, Camelback Ventures Fellow, a Top 20 Changemaker by NBC Latino, and an Aspen Ideas Fellow. He has been featured in *The Washington Post*, NPR's *All Things Considered*, *The New York Times*, CNN, and *The Atlantic*. He has also written for *The Washington Post*, *Teen Vogue*, *USA Today*, and NBC Latino. Carlos proudly served in the Army Reserves as a mechanic for 8 years.