

Date of Hearing: August 18, 2020

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

SB 860 (Beall) – As Amended May 13, 2020

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires each county office of education (COE) Foster Youth Services (FYS) Coordinating Program to ensure the students they serve in foster care fills out the forms necessary to receive financial aid for college. It also requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to report financial aid form completion information. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires each COE FYS Coordinating Program plan to describe how the program will coordinate efforts to ensure a student in foster care will complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) in grade 12.
- 2) Requires each COE FYS Coordinating Program to add data on how many students in foster care complete the FAFSA or CADAA in grade 12 to an existing report to the SPI every other year.
- 3) Requires the SPI to include data on how many students in foster care complete the FAFSA or CADAA while in grade 12 in a report the SPI submits to the Legislature and Governor every other year.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Ongoing minor and absorbable Proposition 98 GF costs to each COE FYS Coordinating Programs to update plans and collect and report data on financial aid form completion by foster youth.

Because operation of a COE FYS Coordinating Program is voluntary, this bill's requirements likely would not be considered a state-mandated activity.

- 2) Ongoing minor and absorbable GF costs to the California Department of Education (CDE) to include information about financial aid form completion by foster youth in an existing report the SPI provides to the Legislature and Governor every other year.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Financial aid is critical for success in higher education, but currently just 40 percent of foster youth received the Pell Grant and only 11 percent received the Cal Grant,

despite virtually all meeting income eligibility requirements. One of the primary barriers that foster youth students face is that many do not complete the FAFSA.

- 2) **Background.** The FAFSA is the financial aid form a US citizen or permanent resident student must fill out for eligibility for most federal and state financial aid, such as the federal Pell Grant, the state Cal Grant and state CHAFEE Grant for foster youth. The CADAA is California's equivalent to the FAFSA for undocumented resident students and is an eligibility requirement for most types of state financial aid, including the Cal Grant and the CHAFEE Grant.

Current law establishes the COE FYS Coordinating Program. A county office of education may apply for a state grant to operate a COE FYS Coordinating Program. The 2020-2021 academic year base grant per county office of education is \$75,000. According to this bill's sponsors, almost all of the state's 58 county offices of education operate a program. The primary purpose of the program is to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care through regional coordination efforts across service providers and direct educational support to foster youth. As a condition of funding, programs must complete annual program plans and an evaluation of their services. In addition, programs must periodically submit certain program data to the CDE. This data is included in a report the SPI submits every other year to the Legislature and Governor about the COE FYS Coordinating Programs.

The vast majority of COE FYS Coordinating Programs already assist foster youth with completion of financial aid forms. In addition, current law requires the programs to report information about college transitions for foster youth to the CDE and requires the SPI to report this data to the Legislature and Governor.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 2015 (Reyes), Chapter 544, Statutes of 2018, requires school districts and charter schools, commencing in the 2020-21 academic year, to ensure that every student receives information on how to properly complete and submit the FAFSA or CADAA at least once before entering grade 12.

AB 1617 (Reyes), of this Legislative Session, would have required students to complete a FAFSA or CADAA as a condition of high school graduation. This bill died in the Assembly Education Committee.

Analysis Prepared by: Natasha Collins / APPR. / (916) 319-2081