
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Alvarado-Gil, Chair

2023 - 2024 Regular

Bill No: SB 307

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Urgency: No

Consultant: Heather Hopkins

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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Middle Class Scholarship Program: community colleges: current and former foster youth

SUMMARY

This bill expands eligibility for the Middle Class Scholarship Program (MCSP) to current or former foster youth who are attending community college and pursuing transfer to a four-year postsecondary educational institution, an associate degree, an associate degree for transfer, or a certificate.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes a state and local system of child welfare services (CWS), including foster care, for children who have been adjudged by the court to be at risk of abuse and neglect or to have been abused or neglected, as specified. (*WIC 202*)
- 2) Establishes a system of juvenile dependency for children for specified reasons, and designates that a child who meets certain criteria is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court and may be adjudged as a dependent child of the court, as specified. (*WIC 300 et seq.*)
- 3) Requires each campus of the CSU and CCC, and requests each campus of the UC, to grant priority enrollment to current and former foster youth and current and former homeless youth. (*Education Code (EDC) 66025.9*)
- 4) Defines a current or former foster youth for the purposes of priority enrollment as a person in California whose dependency was established or continued by the court on or after the youth's 13th birthday and who is no older than 25 years of age at the commencement of the academic year. (*EDC 66025.9*)
- 5) Authorizes the CCC Chancellor's Office to enter into agreements with up to 20 community college districts to provide additional funds for services in support of postsecondary education for foster youth, also known as the Cooperating Agencies Foster

Youth Education Support Program (NextUp). Further provides that services are to include, when appropriate, outreach and recruitment; consultation and eligibility verification; consultation and referrals for students deemed ineligible; service coordination; counseling; book and supply grants; tutoring; independent living and financial literacy skills support; frequent in-person contact; career guidance; transfer counseling; childcare and transportation assistance; referrals to health services, mental health services, housing assistance; and other related services. (*EDC 79220*)

- 6) 6) Requires a student participating in the foster youth education support program to meet both of the following requirements: a) Be a current or former California foster youth whose dependency was established or continued by the court on or after the youth's 16th birthday; and b) Be no older than 25 years of age at the beginning of any academic year in which the student participates in the program. (*EDC 79222*)
- 7) Establishes as eligibility criteria, among other things, that the student qualify to receive a fee waiver with a calculated Expected Family Contribution of \$0. (*California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Sec. 56403*)

This Bill:

- 1) Expands MCSP to community colleges students who are current or former foster youth pursuing transfer to a four-year postsecondary educational institution, an associate degree, an associate degree for transfer, or a certificate and who do not exceed the program's current annual household income and asset thresholds.
- 2) Relaxes the MCSP eligibility requirements for community college students who are current and former foster youth.
- 3) Excludes the student contribution requirement from consideration when determining a current or former foster youth's remaining financial need to cover costs associated with college attendance.
- 4) Requires that the amount necessary to fund MSC awards for community college students who are current or former foster youth be set aside when determining the percentage of each student's remaining cost covered by the award.
- 5) Establishes the maximum MCS award amount for community college students who are current or former foster youth to be the full amount for which they are eligible to receive rather than a percentage of their eligible amount as prescribed for all other recipients.
- 6) Increases the number of years an MCS award can be renewed from 4 to 8 years of full-time attendance for a current or former foster youth enrolled at the UC, CSU or the CCCs.
- 7) Exempts scholarship awards for current or former foster youth attending community college from being reduced in the manner prescribed by current law for all other MCS awards when sufficient funds are unavailable. (Due to a drafting error, the incorrect

paragraph is cited in the bill but the intent of the author is described here.)

- 8) Requires that the Commission maintain a page on its internet website that summarizes the provisions of the Middle Class Scholarship Program that apply to current and former foster youth and title it as “The Fostering Futures Program.”

FISCAL IMPACT

This bill has not yet been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Bill: According to the authors, “California has been making strides to improve access to financial aid for foster youth, but more can be done. Currently, California offers the Chafee Education and Training Voucher, which provides up to \$5,000 annually to eligible foster youth, as well as a \$6,000 Cal Grant award for non-tuition costs. However, even with these investments, the state’s financial aid program has not kept pace with significant increases to the cost of living for students, and foster youth are among those hit hardest by this disparity.”

The authors go on to say, “Every foster youth deserves the opportunity to achieve their college dream, but in too many cases, that dream is out of reach due to financial barriers and extreme challenges that come about in the foster system. This is simply unacceptable. SB 307 will change countless lives by guaranteeing California’s foster youth the financial resources to go to and through college.”

Child Welfare Services (CWS)

The CWS system is an essential component of the state’s safety net. Social workers in each county who receive reports of abuse or neglect, investigate and resolve those reports. When a case is substantiated, a family is either provided with services to ensure a child’s well-being and avoid court involvement, or a child is removed and placed into foster care. In 2022, the state’s child welfare agencies received 440,212 reports of abuse or neglect. Of these, 51,806 reports contained allegations that were substantiated and 19,953 children were removed from their homes and placed into foster care via the CWS system.

Abused and neglected children who have been removed from their homes fall under the jurisdiction of the county’s juvenile dependency court. The dependency court holds legal jurisdiction over the child, while the child is served by a CWS system social worker. This system seeks to ensure the safety and protection of these children, and where possible, preserve and strengthen families through visitation and family reunification. It is the state’s goal to reunify a foster child or youth with their biological family whenever possible. Reunification is accomplished through the child’s biological parents completing all reunifications requirements ordered by a dependency court judge, which typically involves the provision of services, such as drug counseling or parenting classes, to that parent. In instances where reunification is not

possible, due to the parent being unable or unwilling to meet the court's requirements, it is the state's goal to provide a permanent placement alternative, such as adoption or guardianship, with priority placed on uniting children with other relatives or nonrelative extended family members.

Foster Youth and Higher Education

Children and youth typically enter the CWS system because of abuse and/or serious neglect. This trauma is then further compounded by the instability they experience while in foster care, through placement and school changes. The result is well-documented disparities in education outcomes between foster youth and their non-foster peers, with the CalYouth Study reporting that in California just 11 percent of foster youth obtain a degree by age 23 as compared to 36 percent of the same-age non-foster youth population.¹

This bill deals with a current or former foster youth's eligibility for the MCS and relaxes some eligibility requirements to make such financial aid easier to obtain. Foster youth obtain degrees at a rate much lower than non-foster youth. Financial burdens are often a huge barrier to receiving a degree. This bill makes it easier for current or former foster youth to avail themselves of the MCS and in doing so, increases their chances to achieve their educational goals.

Expanding MCS Benefits for Foster Youth

California provides two years of free community college tuition. However, that assistance is limited to tuition and does not include expenses such as books or housing. MSC helps to fill that gap by providing money for unmet needs of students.

MCS provides undergraduate students with a scholarship, and was recently revamped to account for cost of attendance, to attend a UC, CSU or community college Bachelor's degree program. Currently, a community college student pursuing an associate degree or certificate is not eligible for MCS. Students with family income and assets up to \$201,000 may be eligible. To determine each student's award amount, the Commission will first determine each student's remaining cost of attendance, after accounting for other available gift aid, a student contribution from part-time work earnings, and a parent contribution for dependent students with a household income of more than \$100,000. Then, the Commission will determine what percentage of each student's remaining costs to cover based on the annual appropriation for the program. In 2022-23, the program is estimated to cover 24 percent of each student's remaining costs. This bill seeks to have 100 percent of each current or former foster youth's remaining costs covered at community colleges.

Related/Prior Legislation:

SB 228 (Leyva) This bill would have expanded eligibility for priority enrollment for current and former foster youth at the University of California, California State University, and California Community Colleges (CCCs). This bill also would have expanded eligibility for a student support program for current and former foster youth at the CCCs by lowering the age in care requirement from 16 to 13, thus increasing the number of eligible youth. This bill was held on

¹ https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/CY_YT_RE1020.pdf

the Senate floor, but the provisions described above were amended into SB 512 (Min, Chapter 574, Statutes of 2021), which was signed into law.

COMMENTS

As noted in the Senate Education Committee analysis, due to a drafting error, the incorrect paragraph is cited in Education Code Section 70023 (b)(3) of the bill. Should the bill move forward, the author may wish to correct the error by referencing the appropriate subdivision.

PRIOR VOTES

Senate Education Committee:	7-0
Assembly Floor:	
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	
Assembly Committee:	

POSITIONS

Support:

John Burton Advocates for Youth (Sponsor)
3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic
A Better Way, INC.
Alameda County Office of Education
Aspiranet
Associated Students of Pasadena City College
Barstow Community College
Berkeley Hope Scholars
Beyond Emancipation
Butte College Inspiring Scholars
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Chamber of Commerce
California Charter Schools Association (CCSA)
California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association
California Professional Firefighters
California State University, Dominguez Hills - Toro Guardian Scholars Program
California Teachers Association
Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families
Cerritos College
Children Now - Child Welfare
Children Youth & Family Collaborative
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Institute
Children's Legal Services of San Diego

Cuesta College - Financial Aid
Doing Good Works
Ea Family Services
East Bay Leadership Council
Fasd Network of Northern California
Fasd Now! a California Alliance
First Place for Youth
Foster Care Counts
Foster Youth Services At College of The Desert
Haven of Hope
Jovenes, INC.
Mary Graham Children's Foundation
Merced County Independent Living Program
Monterey County Office of Education - Foster Youth Services
Mt. San Antonio College
Mt. San Antonio College- Reach Guardian Scholars
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
Natomas Unified School District
Norco College
North Orange Community College District
Northern California College Promise Coalition
Oak Grove Sanctuary Palm Springs
Pivotal
Power to Soar Foundation
Prevail
Razing the Bar
Reedley College
Rio Hondo College
Riverside City College, Guardian Scholar Program
San Benito County - Health & Human Services
San Diego City College - Nextup Program
San Jose-evergreen Community College District
Schoolhouse Connection
Shasta College - Inspiring & Fostering Independence (SCI*FI)
Smart Justice California
Sonoma County - Family Youth & Children's Services
Students Rising Above
Sycamores
Tlc Child & Family Services - Transition Age Youth Housing
Together We Rise DbA Foster Love
Unite-la
United Friends of The Children
Usc Rossier Pullias Center for Higher Education
Voices - Solano
Waking the Village
Walden Family Services
Wind Youth Services
Woodland Community College Foster & Kinship Care Education

Youth Law Center
Youth Leadership Institute

Oppose:

None received

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