
THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 307
Author: Ashby (D) and McGuire (D), et al.
Introduced: 2/2/23
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 3/29/23
AYES: Newman, Ochoa Bogh, Cortese, Glazer, McGuire, Smallwood-Cuevas,
Wilk

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/24/23
AYES: Alvarado-Gil, Ochoa Bogh, Hurtado, Menjivar, Wahab

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-1, 5/18/23
AYES: Portantino, Ashby, Bradford, Seyarto, Wahab, Wiener
NOES: Jones

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

SOURCE: John Burton Advocates for Youth

DIGEST: This bill expands eligibility for the Middle Class Scholarship (MCS) to community college 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. This bill additionally relaxes eligibility MCS requirements for this group of students.

ANALYSIS: Existing law establishes the MCS program under the administration of the California Student Aid Commission (Commission). Existing law makes an undergraduate student eligible for a scholarship award under the MCS if the student is enrolled at the University of California (UC) or the California State University (CSU), or enrolled in upper division coursework in a community college baccalaureate program, and meets certain eligibility requirements. (Education Code (EC) Sections 70020 – 70023)

This bill:

- 1) Expands eligibility for the MCS program 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 MCS eligibility requirements for community college students who are current and former foster youth as follows:
 - a) Moves the deadline for submitting FAFSA or a CADA from March 2 to September 2.
 - b) Uses the satisfactory academic progress standard established for Chafee program.
 - c) Removes the requirement that students be pursuing their first undergraduate baccalaureate degree to be eligible.
- 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 and 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.
- 4) 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 and 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.
- 5) 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.)*

- 6) 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.”

Comments

- 1) *Need for this bill.* According to the author, “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.”
- 2) *New benefit for foster youth within MCS.* This bill seeks to have 100 percent of each current or former foster youth’s remaining costs covered at community colleges. It accomplishes this by prohibiting award amounts from being reduced and sets aside the amount necessary to fund these awards when award amounts for other recipients are being determined. It also excludes the student contribution requirement (i.e. work requirement) when assessing the amount for which they are qualified, allowing for a larger award. These changes effectively establish a scholarship dedicated for a unique population within the MCS program’s appropriation and framework. The remainder of the MCS appropriation will be rationed among all other qualified students, which may affect their award amounts.
- 3) *Who is eligible?* Under the bill’s provisions, eligibility is extended to current and former foster youth attending a CCC who have submitted the FAFSA or a CADA application by September 2. Community college students must be pursuing transfer, an associate degree, or a certificate, and their annual household income and assets must not exceed the threshold for the MCS program. A current or former foster youth is defined as current or former foster whose dependency was established or continued by the court after their 13th birthday.
- 4) *Foster youth.* According to the letter of support submitted to the committee from John Burton Advocates for Youth, “Children and youth enter foster care due to serious abuse and neglect. This trauma is often compounded by the

instability they experience while in foster care, through placement and school changes. Together, these lead to poor educational outcomes, most notably low rates of college completion: in California, just 10% of foster youth obtain a two-year or four-year degree by the age of 23 compared to 36% of their non-foster youth peers. However, a recent student found that foster youth who receive a Chafee Education and Training Voucher are twice as likely to graduate as those who did not.” This bill seeks to further support foster youth cover their remaining financial need associated with college attendance, including housing, transportation and materials.

- 5) *Award renewals.* This bill, in addition to the benefits provided to community college students, increases the number of years an MCS award can be renewed for current or former foster youth at UC or CSU by four years. This is similar to the renewal limits established in state's Cal Grant program for foster youth. Unlike the Cal Grant, MCS is not an entitlement program and not all eligible students will get their full scholarship.
- 6) *Relaxes some eligibility requirements.* This measure also relaxes some MCS eligibility rules specifically for current and former foster youth, including changes that could make the program available to students pursuing a second baccalaureate degree, extends the application deadline, and employs a less stringent process when failing to meet satisfactory academic progress standards. These changes do not apply to non-foster youth.
- 7) *MCS implementation concerns.* Making changes to the MCS to better serve those with the greatest financial need such as current or former foster youth is a worthy goal, but doing so in the manner prescribed by the bill may present implementation challenges, given the difficulties mentioned in the Senate Education Committee analysis. Additionally, because the bill grows the program at the community colleges, it is unclear whether the community college financial aid offices are prepared or equipped to participate in this program, given that they do not currently administer MCS at the proposed level. *To ensure that implementation is feasible so that newly eligible current or foster youth, as well as other students, receive awards in a timely manner and campuses and the Commission are equipped to administer the program the author may wish to consider extending the bill's implementation date.*

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- This bill provides that its provisions would be implemented within the existing MCS program budget, therefore any costs exceeding that amount would result in reductions to MCS awards. The Commission estimates that this bill's impact on the existing MCS appropriation would range from \$65.7 million to \$288.9 million. On the low end, this estimate assumes there would be a minimum of 4,417 foster youth students attending community college part-time. On the high end, the estimate assumes there would be approximately 16,620 students attending community college full-time. A precise number would depend on a variety of factors, most notably student behavior and the number of students that transition from part-time or less to full-time due to the availability of the new community college MCS grant. The Commission indicates it assumed an average cost of attendance of \$25,000 for community college students and then subtracted the estimated Pell, Cal and Chafee grant amounts.
- The Commission estimates one-time General Fund costs of \$614,000 in the first year of implementation, and ongoing General Fund costs of \$292,000 to administer the MCS program for foster youth. These resources would be needed to support program implementation and IT systems development since the Commission's existing IT processes were not designed to communicate or interact with all of the 115 community college campuses and their different automated systems or manual processes. The Commission indicates that IT enhancements would also be necessary for the MCS programs at UC and CSU.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/18/23)

John Burton Advocates for Youth (source)

3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic

A Better Way, Inc.

Alameda County Office of Education, Foster Youth Services Coordinating

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
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
Chief Probation Officers' of California
Children Now
Children Youth & Family Collaborative
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Institute
Children's Law Center of California
Children's Legal Services of San Diego
City Year Inc.
County of Santa Clara
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Cuesta College
Doing Good Works
EA Family Services
East Bay Leadership Council
FASD Network of Northern California
FASDNow! a California Alliance
First Place for Youth
Foster Care Counts
Foster Youth Services at College of the Desert
GENup
Haven of Hope
Jovenes, Inc.
League of Women Voters of California
Los Angeles County
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
On The Move/VOICES
Pivotal
Power to Soar Foundation
Prevail
Rancho Santiago Community College District
Razing The Bar
Reedley College
Rio Hondo College
Riverside City College, Guardian Scholar Program
San Benito County - Health & Human Services Agency - Child Welfare Division
San Diego City College
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District
Schoolhouse Connection
Shasta College - Inspiring & Fostering Independence
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
United Friends of the Children
Unite-LA
USC Rossier Pullias Center for Education
Waking the Village
Walden Family Services
Wind Youth Services
Woodland Community College Foster & Kinship Care Education
Youth Law Center
Youth Leadership Institute

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/18/23)

None received

Prepared by: Olgalilia Ramirez / ED. / (916) 651-4105
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