

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 2766 (Ahrens) – As Amended April 8, 2026

[Note: This bill is double referred to the Assembly Committee on Human Services and will be heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: student housing: foster youth and homeless youth.

SUMMARY: Expands and strengthens protections for foster youth and homeless youth in California's public postsecondary education system. **Specifically**, this bill:

- 1) Expands priority enrollment eligibility to include foster youth over age 25 who are enrolled in the NextUp program.
- 2) Mandates housing priority for California Community Colleges (CCC) thus, converting existing permissive authority for CCC to provide priority housing to current and former foster and homeless youth, into binding requirements.
- 3) Strengthens housing requirements for California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) by requiring CSU and UC campuses to implement housing application identification questions, defer housing-related costs until financial aid disbursement, and post eligibility information on their websites.
- 4) Establishes cost deferral protections across all three public postsecondary segments (CCC, CSU, UC), prohibiting denial of housing placement or cancellation of assignments based on inability to prepay housing-related costs before financial aid arrives.
- 5) Stipulates that the initial waiving of an eligible students' housing-related costs does not permanently waive their costs; the students ultimately have the responsibility for payment and the campus is not required to forgive costs.

EXISTING LAW: *Federal.* Defines “homeless children and youth” as children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including those who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; staying in motels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to the lack of an adequate alternative; staying in shelters or transitional housing; or sleeping in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or similar settings (42 U.S.C. Section 11434a(2)).

State.

- 1) Establishes the CSU, under the administration of the Trustees of the CSU, the UC, under the administration of the Regents of the UC, the CCC, under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, and independent institutions of higher education, as defined, as four segments of postsecondary education in the State (Education Code (EC) Section 66010.4, et seq.).

- 2) Establishes priority enrollment for foster youth and homeless youth at CSU, CCC, and UC campuses, currently limited to youth younger than 25 years of age at the commencement of the academic year (EC Section 66025.9).
- 3) Requests CCC campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth and provide year-round housing at no extra cost during breaks (EC Section 76010).
- 4) Requires CSU campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth (EC Section 90001.5).
- 5) Requires UC campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth, subject to the UC Regents issuing a resolution approval (EC Section 92660).
- 6) Establishes the NextUp program for foster youth services in CCCs (EC Section 79220, et seq.).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Purpose of this measure.* According to the author, “foster youth and students experiencing homelessness complete college at far lower rates than their peers. Just 12% and 15%, respectively, earn a degree by age 29, compared to 49% of the general student population.”

The author states that, “housing instability is a key barrier: nearly half of foster youth experience homelessness while attending community college and 25% while attending a CSU, and students without stable housing face greater risk of academic failure. For students with extremely limited means, even a small upfront cost like a housing deposit due before financial aid is disbursed can derail their path to stable housing. Foster youth also risk losing priority registration eligibility before completing their degrees, leaving them unable to enroll in required courses in time to graduate.”

The author further states that, “AB 2766 removes key structural barriers that prevent vulnerable students from enrolling, persisting, and completing their postsecondary education. As someone who has experience with homelessness and the foster care system, I understand how difficult it can be to complete college without stable, secure housing. I also understand the transformative power of a college degree, and the vast potential for expanded opportunity it can create. This bill takes several simple yet impactful steps to promote academic success for former and current foster youth and students experiencing homelessness, providing crucial support to vulnerable individuals and promoting upward mobility.”

This measure seeks to address these barriers through several targeted measures:

- 1) Require, rather than request, the CCC to provide priority housing for current and former foster youth and students experiencing homelessness;
- 2) Require CCC and CSU, and request the UC campuses, to identify eligible students in housing applications and publicize priority housing benefits on their websites;
- 3) Require CCC and CSU campuses, and request UC campuses, to defer housing deposits and fees until after financial aid is disbursed; and,

- 4) Align priority registration eligibility with the NextUp foster youth support program to ensure foster youth can access required courses and graduate on time.

Committee comments. Committee Staff understands that many campuses are facing staffing shortages. Implementation of some of the provisions of this measure could pose fiscal challenges to some campuses.

Moving forward, the author may wish, in consultation with the segments, to explore if a budgetary ask is necessary for the segments to be able to fully implement the entire measure.

Arguments in support. According to the John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY), sponsors of this measure, “nearly half of foster youth attending community college experience homelessness, as do 25 percent of foster youth enrolled in the Cal State University (CSU) system. Research demonstrates a clear connection between a lack of stable housing and failure to persist in and complete postsecondary education. While the CSU system is required—and the University of California (UC) system is required upon adoption by the Regents—to provide priority housing to current and former foster youth and students experiencing homelessness, the California Community Colleges (CCCs) are not subject to this requirement. As a result, students at CCCs—who make up the majority of these populations—face unequal access to stable housing, even as community college housing capacity has expanded.”

Further, JBAY states that, “even where campus housing is available, upfront costs such as housing application fees and deposits, often due months before financial aid is disbursed, can create additional barriers. For students with little or no financial support, these upfront costs can block access to campus housing and, in some cases, prevent enrollment altogether.”

Related legislation. AB 2768 (Ahrens), which is scheduled to be heard by this Committee, on April 21, 2026, in part, requires the CSU, CCC districts, and private postsecondary educational institutions and independent institutions of higher education that receive state financial assistance to, and requests the UC to, defer the unpaid portion of enrollment fees and costs for a student that is a foster youth or former foster youth, as defined, upon the student’s initial enrollment at the postsecondary educational institutional until the student has received an initial disbursement of the student’s financial aid award, as provided.

Prior legislation. AB 1228 (Gipson), Chapter 571, Statutes of 2015, in part, extends priority for housing at the UC, the CSU, and the CCC to homeless youth, and requests campuses to develop plans to ensure that homeless and foster youth have housing during breaks.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alliance for Children's Rights

Aspiranet

ASUCD Housing and Transportation Advocacy Committee

Cal Poly Humboldt Elite Scholars Program

California Alliance of Caregivers

California Alliance of Child and Family Services

California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association

CFT– a Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO

Chabot College GSP/NextUp
Children Now
Children Youth & Family Collaborative
Children's Law Center of California
College Democrats At UC Irvine
Davis College Democrats
Depaul USA
Educating Students Together
EveryChild Foundation
Foster and Homeless Youth College Housing Authority
Foster Youth Pre-college Collective
Gavilan College NextUp
Hope Elementary School District
Indivisible CA Statestrong
John Burton Advocates for Youth (Sponsor)
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
Los Angeles Unified School District
Marin County Superintendent of Schools
National Center for Youth Law
NextGen California
Ohlone College NextUp
Orange County United Way
Oxnard College - EOPS
Public Advocates
Rowland Unified School District
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
San Bernardino Valley College Guardian Scholars
San Diego City College - NextUp Program
Santa Cruz County Office of Education
Santa Rose Junior College GSP/NextUp
Schoolhouse Connection
Student Homes at SJSU
Student Homes at UCLA
Student Homes at UCSB
Student Homes at UCSD Student Homes Coalition
The Institute for College Access & Success
UC Davis Guardian Scholars
UC Riverside Foster Youth Support Services
UCLA CalKids Institute
United Friends of the Children
University Housing Rights Organization At UC Berkeley
Urban Studies Student Association
Youthbridge Housing

Opposition

None on file.

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