

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

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

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

SUMMARY: Expands protections for foster youth and homeless youth in California's public postsecondary education system and extends priority enrollment to foster youth and former foster youth who are older than 25 years of age. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Revises the definition of “foster youth and former foster youth” for the purposes of granting priority registration at a California State University (CSU), California Community College (CCC), or University of California (UC), to include a student who is enrolled in the NextUp program.
- 2) Extends priority enrollment to foster youth and former foster youth who are older than 25 years of age, provided they are enrolled in the NextUp program at a CCC, removing the existing age cap of 25 years of age for that population. Retains existing priority enrollment requirements and requests for foster youth under 25 years of age and for homeless youth under 25 years of age across CCC, CSU, and UC campuses that administer priority enrollment systems.
- 3) Converts the existing housing priority for current and former foster youth and current and former homeless youth at CCC campuses that maintain student housing from a request to a mandate, requiring campuses to give priority housing to these students.
- 4) Requires CCC campuses with year-round or school break housing to give first priority to current and former foster youth and homeless youth for housing that is open for uninterrupted year-round occupation, at no extra cost during academic or campus breaks, and next priority for housing open during the most days in the calendar year.
- 5) Requires CCC and CSU campuses, and subject to approval by resolution, UC campuses, that maintain student housing to include in their student housing applications questions designed to identify students who may be eligible for priority housing as current or former foster youth or current or former homeless youth.
- 6) Requires CCC and CSU campuses, and subject to approval by resolution, UC campuses, that maintain student housing to defer or waive the collection of housing-related costs required for initial occupancy for eligible students until those students receive their financial aid disbursement for the applicable academic term.
- 7) Requires eligible students, as a condition of the deferral or waiver, to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if applicable, a California Dream Act application for the academic year in which housing is sought.
- 8) Prohibits campuses from denying housing placement, canceling a housing assignment, or conditioning access to student housing on the prepayment of housing-related costs before an eligible student receives their financial aid disbursement.

- 9) Authorizes campuses to require payment of deferred housing-related costs if an eligible student does not receive a financial aid disbursement after submitting a FAFSA or Dream Act application, provided that all of the following conditions are met:
 - a) The campus has provided written notice to the student that they did not receive a financial aid disbursement for the applicable term;
 - b) The student is given a reasonable period of time to submit payment, which must be no less than 30 days from the date of the written notice; and,
 - c) The campus has not assessed late fees, penalties, or interest charges before the 30-day period expires.
- 10) Clarifies that the deferral and waiver provisions do not eliminate a student's ultimate responsibility for payment of housing-related costs, and do not require a campus to forgive those costs.
- 11) Requires CCC and CSU campuses that maintain student housing facilities to post on their websites, on any page that provides information about campus student housing, information describing priority housing benefits and eligibility criteria for those benefits.
- 12) Requests, but does not require, UC campuses to post the same priority housing information on their websites, consistent with the Regents' resolution framework applicable to UC throughout these provisions.
- 13) Provides that a student verified as a former homeless youth retains that status for a period of six years from the date of admission to the postsecondary educational institution, ensuring that students do not lose priority housing eligibility due to the passage of time after their initial verification.
- 14) Specifies that the housing priority, application identification, deferral and waiver, and website posting provisions applicable to UC campuses do not take effect unless and until the Regents of the UC adopt an appropriate resolution making those provisions applicable, consistent with the constitutional autonomy of the UC.
- 15) Defines housing-related costs to include, but not be limited to, housing application fees, housing deposits, security deposits, administrative fees, and other charges required as a condition of securing or maintaining student housing.
- 16) Defines "eligible student" to mean a student who is eligible for priority housing pursuant to these provisions.
- 17) Defines "housing-related costs" to include, but not be limited to, housing application fees, housing deposits, security deposits, administrative fees, or other charges required as a condition of securing or maintaining student housing.

EXISTING LAW:

- 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 [EDC] § 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. (EDC § 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. (EDC § 76010)
- 4) Requires CSU campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth. (EDC § 90001.5)
- 5) Requires UC campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth, subject to the UC Regents issuing a resolution approval. (EDC § 92660)
- 6) Establishes the NextUp program for foster youth services in CCCs. (EDC § 79220, *et seq.*)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, this bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS: This analysis only discusses policy issues germane to the Assembly Committee on Human Services.

Background: *Foster Youth and Housing Instability in Higher Education.* Foster youth face some of the most severe barriers to postsecondary educational attainment of any student population. By 29 years of age, only 12% of foster youth have completed a two-year or four-year degree, compared to 49% of the general student population.¹ Housing instability is a central driver of this gap. Nearly half of foster youth attending a CCC experience homelessness while enrolled, and approximately 25% of those attending a CSU campus face the same.²

Research consistently finds that housing insecurity is associated with lower grade point averages, poorer mental health outcomes, reduced persistence, and lower credit attainment, all of which compound the already significant challenges facing students who have aged out of or exited the foster care system. One overlooked barrier is the timing of housing-related costs. Deposits, application fees, and other upfront charges required to secure campus housing are typically due months before financial aid is disbursed. For students with extremely limited financial resources and no family safety net, this timing gap can make stable housing inaccessible at the start of an academic term. *This bill* addresses this directly by requiring CCC and CSU campuses, and requesting UC campuses, to defer or waive housing-related costs for eligible students until financial aid is disbursed, and prohibiting campuses from denying or canceling housing assignments based on failure to prepay.³

¹ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23328584251331454>

² https://www.ccleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2025_BasicNeedsSurveyBook_FINAL.pdf

³ <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/article/college-student-homelessness-policy-brief>

The bill also addresses inconsistency in current law: while CSU and UC campuses are already required or requested to provide priority housing to foster youth and homeless youth students, CCCs, which enroll the largest share of this population are only requested to do so. *This bill* converts that request to a mandate, bringing CCC obligations in line with those of the other segments and closing an equity gap in the campus housing system.

The NextUp Program and Priority Registration. The NextUp program, formerly known as Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support, is the CCC system's primary support program for current and former foster youth. Operating on 45 campuses across the state, NextUp provides eligible students with a comprehensive set of wraparound services including emergency housing assistance, textbook and supply support, transportation, tutoring, counseling, career and transfer assistance, and priority registration.⁴

To be eligible, students must be current or former foster youth whose dependency was established or continued by a court on or after their 13th birthday. Eligibility to first enroll in the program requires that the student be under 26 years of age at the start of the academic year, though students enrolled before turning 26 may continue in the program beyond that age.

AB 190 (Assembly Committee on Budget), Chapter 572, Statutes of 2022, was a higher education trailer bill that extended NextUp participation to students who were already enrolled when they turned 26 years of age, allowing them to remain in the program and continue receiving services. However, the corresponding priority enrollment benefit which allows students to register for courses before the general student population was not similarly extended. As a result, approximately 900 students over 25 years of age are enrolled in NextUp and are receiving support services, but are not eligible for priority registration. Without priority registration, foster youth may be unable to enroll in required courses in time to meet graduation or transfer requirements, undermining the outcomes the program is designed to support. *This bill* extends priority enrollment eligibility to foster youth enrolled in NextUp regardless of age, aligning registration benefits with program participation.

Author's Statement: According to the Author, “[This bill] 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.”

Equity Implications: The provisions of *this bill* seek to address the barriers that fall disproportionately on students who are already among the most marginalized in California's higher education system. Foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness are disproportionately youth of color who have been failed by, or pushed out of, the systems meant to protect them. According to a 2024 Legislative Analyst's Office report, Black and Native American youth are represented in California's child welfare system at approximately four times their share of the general child population.⁵ LGBTQ+ youth are also significantly

⁴ <https://icangotocollege.com/financial-aid/foster-youth-support>

⁵ <https://lao.ca.gov/handouts/socservices/2024/Child-Welfare-Disparities-040324.pdf>

overrepresented among homeless young people on college campuses. For these students, the absence of a stable housing guarantee, the inability to afford a deposit before financial aid arrives, and the loss of priority registration that allows them to properly build a class schedule are the difference between persistence and dropout. By mandating, rather than requesting, priority housing at community colleges, requiring campuses to proactively identify eligible students through housing applications, and ensuring that priority registration tracks with program enrollment rather than age, *this bill* removes structural barriers for these vulnerable students. Students who have experienced the child welfare system or homelessness should be able to access housing stability without navigating additional administrative processes while pursuing higher education.

Double referral: This bill was previously heard in the Assembly Committee on Higher Education on April 14, 2027, and was approved on a 9-0 vote.

Arguments in Support: According to the sponsor, John Advocates for Youth, “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.

“A second key factor contributing to low college completion rates among foster and homeless youth in community colleges is their limited access to priority registration, which currently ends when a student turns 26. Priority registration allows designated student groups to enroll in classes before the general student population, helping them secure required courses, stay on track for timely graduation, and reduce overall educational costs. Unfortunately, approximately 900 students in the NextUp foster youth support program are over the age of 25 and currently unable to access this benefit.”

Arguments in Opposition: None on file.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 190 (Assembly Committee on Budget, Chapter 572, Statutes of 2022), see comments above.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

John Burton Advocates for Youth (Sponsor)
 Aspiranet
 ASUCD Housing and Transportation and Advocacy Committee
 Bill Wilson Center
 California Alliance of Caregivers
 California Alliance of Child and Family Services
 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
 California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association
 California Youth Connection (CYC)
 CFT – a Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO
 Children Now
 Children's Law Center of California

College Democrats at UC Irvine
Corona Norco Unified School District
Davis College Democrats
Everychild Foundation
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley
Generation Up
Hope School District
Independent Living Program at Woodland Community College
Indivisible CA StateStrong
Journey House
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
Los Angeles Unified School District
Marin County Office of Education
National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)
NextGen California
NextGen Policy
Ohlone College NextUp
Orange County United Way
Public Advocates
Rowland Unified School District Family Resource Center
Sacramento County Office of Education
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
San Bernardino Valley College Guardian Scholars
San Diego City College - NextUp Program
Santa Cruz County Office of Education
SchoolHouse Connection
Stepping Forward LA
Student Homes At SJSU
Student Homes At UCLA
Student Homes At UCSB
Student Homes At UCSD
Student Homes Coalition
uAspire
UCLA CalKIDA Institute
United Friends of the Children
University Housing Rights Organization At UC Berkeley
University of California
University of California Student Association
Urban Studies Student Association
YouthBridge Housing

Opposition

None on file.

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