
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 2766	Hearing Date:	June 10, 2026
Author:	Ahrens		
Version:	May 28, 2026		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Olgalilia Ramirez		

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

NOTE: This bill has been referred to the Committees on Education and *Human Services*. A “do pass” motion should include referral to the Committee on *Human Services*.

SUMMARY

This bill requires, instead of requests, housing priority at a California Community College (CCC) be granted to foster and homeless youth, and requires a CCC, California State University (CSU), and request the University of California (UC) to waive or defer housing costs for foster and homeless youth until they have received their financial aid disbursement. It further expands priority registration for enrollment to foster youth to include those enrolled in the NextUp program at a CCC.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Defines, under federal law, “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 United States Code § 11434a(2))

State law:

- 2) 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) § 66010.4 et seq.)
- 3) 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 § 66025.9)

- 4) Requests CCC campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth and provide year-round housing at no extra cost during breaks. (EC § 76010)
- 5) Requires CSU campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth. (EC § 90001.5)
- 6) Requires UC campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth, subject to the UC Regents issuing a resolution of approval. (EC § 92660)
- 7) Establishes the NextUp program for foster youth services in CCCs. (EC § 79220 et seq.)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

Priority enrollment

- 1) Expands the definition of current and former foster youth to include CCC students who are enrolled in the NextUp program at a CCC for purposes of determining and granting priority registration for enrollment.

Priority for housing, fee deferral, and waivers at CCCs

- 2) Requires each CCC campus that maintains student housing facilities to do all of the following:
 - a) Grant priority for housing to current and former homeless youth and current and former foster youth.
 - b) For CCCs that maintain student housing facilities open for occupation during school breaks, or on a year round basis grant first priority to current and former homeless youth and current and former foster youth at no extra cost.
 - c) Include in its student housing application, questions designed to identify students who may be eligible for priority housing, as prescribed.
 - d) Defer or waive, notwithstanding any other law, the collection of any housing-related costs required for initial occupancy for an eligible student until the student receives their disbursement of financial aid for the applicable academic term.
 - e) Require as a condition of eligibility for the deferral or waiver that the student submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California DREAM Act application, as applicable, for the academic term in which the housing is sought.
 - f) Not deny housing placement, cancel a housing assignment, or condition

access to student housing on the prepayment of housing-related costs by an eligible student before the student receives their disbursement of financial aid for the applicable term.

- g) Post on its internet website information describing priority housing benefits and the eligibility criteria for those benefits.

Priority housing, fee deferral, and waiver at CSU and UC

- 3) Requires, *in addition to granting priority and access during breaks, as provided in current law*, each CSU and UC campus that maintains student housing facilities to do all of the following:
 - a) Include in its student housing application, questions designed to identify students who may be eligible for priority housing, as prescribed.
 - b) Defer or waive, notwithstanding any other law, the collection of any housing-related costs required for initial occupancy for an eligible student until the student receives their disbursement of financial aid for the applicable academic term.
 - c) Require as a condition of eligibility for the deferral or waiver that the student submit a FAFSA or the California DREAM Act application, as applicable, for the academic term in which the housing is sought.
 - d) Not deny housing placement, cancel a housing assignment, or condition access to student housing on the prepayment of housing-related costs by an eligible student before the student receives their disbursement of financial aid for the applicable term.
 - e) Post on its internet website information describing priority housing benefits and the eligibility criteria for those benefits.

Conditions for collecting payment for housing at CCC, CSU, and UC.

- 4) Authorizes each CCC, CSU, and UC campus that maintains student housing facilities to require payment of the deferred housing-related costs if an eligible student does not receive a financial aid disbursement for the applicable academic term after submitting a FAFSA or California Dream Act application provided that all of the following has occurred:
 - a) The campus has provided a written notice informing the student that they did not receive a financial aid disbursement for the applicable academic term.
 - b) The student is afforded a reasonable period of time, which is not less than 30 days from the date of the notice to submit payment.
 - c) The campus has not assessed late fees, penalties, or interest charges before expiration of the reasonable period of time provided.

- 5) States that the provisions governing deferral or waiver of housing related costs at CCC, CSU and UC campuses do not waive a student's ultimate responsibility for payment of housing-related costs not waived nor does it require a campus to forgive those costs.

Miscellaneous

- 6) Defines terms for purposes including the following:
 - a) "Housing related costs" to mean costs including, but are not limited to, housing application fees, housing deposits, security deposits, administrative fees, or other charges required as a condition of securing or maintaining student housing.
- 7) Makes other technical changes.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, "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."
- 2) **NextUp.** The Student Success Task Force reported that students who maintained full-time enrollment (12 units) were more likely to meet their educational goals. Regulations established eligibility for student support to include full-time enrollment. However, reports specific to educational outcomes of foster youth found that maintaining full-time enrollment is an obstacle for students who are current or former foster youth; many do not continue to attend beyond the first year. As a result, legislation established the "Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support Program" in statute in 2015. In 2017, the CCC Chancellor's Office changed the name of this program to "NextUp." The goal is to provide the support and services to students necessary to assist them in meeting the requirements of the Student Success Act.

A student is eligible to be served by the NextUp program if the student is a current or former foster youth who was in care on or after the student's 13th birthday, is enrolled in at least 9 units, and is not older than 25 years of age at the beginning of the academic term in which the student participates in NextUp. Students enrolled in fewer than nine units may be accepted if enrollment is part of an education plan designed to move the student toward subsequent enrollment in at least 9 units.

The NextUp program provides traditional student support services such as orientation, in addition to 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, child care and transportation assistance, and referrals to health services, mental health services, housing assistance, and other related services.

Existing law requires the CCC Board of Governors to report biennially, describing its efforts to serve students who are current and former foster youth, and include:

- a) A review on a campus-by-campus basis of the enrollment, retention, transfer, and completion rates of foster youth, including categorical funding of those programs.
- b) Recommendations on whether and how the program under this article can be expanded to all community college districts and campuses.

The 2020 report recommends that programs place a strong emphasis on student outreach, growth, and retention by expanding the wraparound support services and individualized case management.

- 3) **Age requirements for priority enrollment.** Priority enrollment decisions are made at the campus level at each segment. The process allows specific students access to classes ahead of the general student population. For example, continuing students are generally allowed to enroll in courses before new students enroll. As such, students who have priority registration status have an advantage over other students. Under current law, students who were in foster care on or after their 13th birthday and who are no older than 25 years of age at the commencement of the academic year are eligible for priority enrollment at CSU, CCCs, and UC. This bill expands eligibility for priority enrollment at CCCs by including students who are enrolled in the NextUP program. Effectively extending eligibility to older students who entered the NextUp program at age 25.
- 4) **New priority housing requirement for CCCs.** According to the Chancellor's 2024 student housing report, 6 percent of students receiving housing assistance are current or former foster youth and about nine percent are homeless. About 16 CCCs or parent colleges currently provide campus-owned, campus-operated, or campus-affiliated student housing. More than 80 percent of CCCs that currently offer housing also have students on waiting lists. This bill requires CCCs that maintain student housing facilities to grant priority housing to homeless and foster youth. Current law already requires CSU and requests UC to do the same at their respective institutions.
- 5) **Expands housing support for homeless and foster youth.** According to the 2024 NextUp report, foster youth often lack caregivers who can assist with the complexities of college admissions and financial aid. Once enrolled, they frequently face limited access to critical resources such as stable housing and financial support. These barriers contribute to disproportionate rates of poverty,

housing insecurity, and homelessness, which in turn negatively impact academic performance, credit accumulation, and eligibility for financial aid. Information provided by the author notes that in a 2023 study, *Housing Insecurity and Homelessness Among College Students*, housing insecurity and homelessness show a strong, statistically significant negative relationship with college completion rates, persistence, and credit attainment. This bill attempts to ease access to campus housing for foster and homeless youth by requiring CCCs, CSUs, and requesting UC to identify potentially eligible foster and homeless youth through the housing application process, defer or waive housing related costs, and maintain publicly available information regarding priority housing eligibility and benefits. The deferral or waiver of housing related costs is effective until the students receive their financial aid disbursement. Students are required to submit a FAFSA or CA Dream Act application as a condition for qualifying for fee deferral or waiver. Institutions are permitted to collect payment if the student does not receive a financial aid disbursement under certain circumstances.

6) **Prior and related legislation.**

AB 2768 (Ahrens, 2026) would require 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. AB 2768 has been referred to this Committee.

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.

SUPPORT

John Burton Advocates for Youth (co-sponsor)
Student Homes Coalition (co-sponsor)
uAspire (co-sponsor)
University of California Student Association (co-sponsor)
Alliance for a Better Community
Alliance for Children's Rights
Allies for Every Child
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association
Children Now
Children Youth & Family Collaborative
Children's Law Center of California
College for All Coalition

County of Santa Clara
Davis College Democrats
Everychild Foundation
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
Latino and Latina Roundtable of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley
Los Angeles Unified School District
Ohlone College NextUp
Orange County United Way
Pasadena City College-Next Up Program
Public Advocates
Public Counsel
Sacramento County Office of Education
San Bernardino Valley College Guardian Scholars
Santa Clara County Office of Education
Santa Cruz County Office of Education
SchoolHouse Connection
Student Homes At SJSU
Student Homes At UCLA
Student Homes At UCSB
Student Homes At UCSD
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
The Institute for College Access & Success
UCLA CaKIDS Institute
University Housing Rights Organization at UC Berkeley
University of California
YouthBridge Housing

OPPOSITION

None received

-- END --