
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2766
Author: Ahrens
Version: May 28, 2026
Urgency: No
Consultant: Naima Ford Antal
Hearing Date: June 29, 2026
Fiscal: Yes

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

SUMMARY

This bill makes changes to the student housing prioritization process for former foster youth enrolled in a University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), or California Community College (CCC) campus.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes a state and local system of child welfare services, 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. (*Welfare and Institutions Code [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) 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*)
- 5) Requires CSU campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth. (*EDC 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. (*EDC 92660*)
- 7) 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(a)*)

- 8) 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 13th 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*)

This Bill:

- 1) Redefines "foster youth and former foster youth," for purposes of eligibility for priority enrollment into the UC, CSU and CCC system, to include a person who is enrolled in the NextUp program.
- 2) Requires CCC campuses that maintain student housing facilities to give priority housing enrollment to current and former homeless youth and current and former foster youth.
- 3) Requires CCC campuses that maintain student housing facilities open for occupation during school breaks, or on a year-round basis, to give first priority to current and former homeless youth and current and former foster youth for residence in the housing facilities.
- 4) Requires each UC, CSU, and CCC campus that maintains student housing facilities to include questions in its student housing application designed to identify students who may be eligible for priority housing.
- 5) Requires each UC, CSU, and CCC campus that maintains student housing facilities to defer or waive 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.
 - a. Requires UC, CSU, and CCC campuses to require as a condition of eligibility for the deferral or waiver that the student submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if applicable, a California Dream Act application, for the academic year in which the housing is sought.
- 6) Prohibits each UC, CSU, and CCC campus that maintains student housing facilities from denying housing placement, canceling a housing assignment, or to 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.

- 7) Allows, if an eligible student does not receive a financial aid disbursement for the applicable academic term after submitting a FAFSA or a California Dream Act application, the UC, CSU, and CCC campus to require payment of the deferred housing-related costs, 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 shall not be less than 30 days from the date of the notice to submit the payment.
 - c. The campus has not assessed late fees, penalties, or interest charges before those 30 days.
- 8) Does not waive a student's ultimate responsibility for payment of housing-related costs not waived or require a campus to forgive those cost.
- 9) Requires each UC, CSU, and CCC campus that maintains student housing facilities to post on its internet website, or any web page that provides information regarding campus student housing, information describing priority housing benefits and the eligibility criteria for those benefits.
- 10) Defines "eligible student" to mean a student who is eligible for priority housing, for the purposes of this bill.
- 11) Defines "housing-related costs" to include, 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, for the purposes of this bill.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill has minor and absorbable costs to the UC, CSU, and CCC.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of 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.”

Foster Youth and Higher Education

Children and youth typically enter the child welfare 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

Housing insecurity is one driver of educational outcome disparities for former foster youth, but it is a growing problem for all college students. One study showed that “homelessness affects 12% of community college students and 9% of university students over a 12-month period.”² Students that experienced housing insecurity also had other basic needs challenges and more difficulty reaching their educational goals. According to the California Community College Basic Needs Survey Report, though reported homelessness rates have gone down among former foster youth, 47% of the former foster youth surveyed experienced homelessness, compared to 18% of non-former foster youth. Among former foster youth, 82% experienced housing insecurity versus 57% of non-former foster youth.

This bill will ensure former foster youth have access to priority housing enrollment and waiver or deferral of housing fees in all three public college and university systems. The bill also requires CCCs that have student housing facilities that are open during school breaks, or on a year-round basis, to give former foster youth priority to obtain that housing.

Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Education Support Program (NextUP)

The data also suggests that campus-based support programs make a big difference in the success of foster youth in higher education. A 2020 study found that foster youth who participated in a campus support program were twice as likely to stay in school as those who did not.³ The NextUP program was established through SB 1023 (*Lui, Chapter 771, Statutes of 2014*) and a 2015 budget allocation to provide support and services to qualifying current or former foster youth with the goal of helping them meet the requirements of the Student Success Act. The Student Success Act, SB 1456 (*Lowenthal, Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012*), enacted recommendations of the Student Success Task force to help increase student success by establishing critical support services, such as the community college programs for educationally disadvantaged students (EOPS), among other things. SB 1023 was in part introduced in response to a 2013 study, published by the Stuart Foundation, which found that youth in foster care were 47 percent less likely to enter a CCC than the general student population and 51 percent less likely to return after the first year. SB 1023 sought to provide an additional supplemental component of EOPS, specific to the needs of current and former foster youth. This included

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

² bipartisanpolicy.org/article/housing-insecurity-and-homelessness-among-college-students/

³ Okpych, N., Park, S., Sayed, S., Courtney, M. 2020. The roles of Campus-Support Programs (CSPs) and Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs) on college persistence for youth with foster care histories, Children and Youth Services Review 111.

reducing the enrollment requirements for current and former foster youth to access support from full-time, 12 units, to nine units, thus allowing foster youth greater flexibility as they navigate the college experience.

Participating CCCs have a NextUP coordinator or counselor within their EOPS to help current or former foster youth navigate the services available to them. A student is eligible for NextUP services if they were in foster care on or after their 13th birthday, are enrolled in at least nine units, and are not older than 25 years of age at the beginning of the academic term. However, if a student is enrolled in the program prior to turning 26 years old, they are allowed to continue participating in the program beyond the age of 26.

NextUP provides qualifying current or former foster youth with a myriad of services including outreach and recruitment; consultation and eligibility verification; service coordination; counseling; tutoring; career guidance; and direct support for non-tuition costs, such as books, childcare, transportation, and housing. NextUP students also receive frequent in-person contact, career guidance, transfer counseling, and referrals to health services, mental health services, housing assistance, and other related services. NextUP students can also receive priority enrollment. This bill expands the definition of former foster youth for purposes of priority enrollment, which is limited to people 25 and younger, to include all participants of the NextUP program who are benefiting from other services provided to former foster youth regardless of age.

Related/Prior Legislation:

AB 2768 (Ahrens, 2026) requires CSUs, CCCs, and requests UCs to waive or defer the unpaid portion of enrollment fees and costs for a student who has submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or California Dream Act Application, if applicable, and if a former foster youth until the student has received their financial aid award. AB 2768 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 190 (Assembly Committee on Budget, Chapter 572, Statutes of 2022) a higher education trailer bill that, among other things, extended NextUP participation to students who were already enrolled when they turned 26 years of age.

SB 1023 (Lui, Chapter 771, Statutes of 2014) created the Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support Program, also known as NextUP. Required services for former foster youth to include but not be limited to outreach and recruitment, 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.

COMMENTS

AB 2766 gives former foster youth certain advantages when applying for student housing at California's public colleges and universities. Many former foster youth have grown up experiencing housing instability and CCC students are more than twice as likely to experience homelessness in college. This bill requires UCs, CSUs, and CCCs to prioritize former foster youth for housing and housing resources as well as waive or defer housing fees until they receive

financial aid. These efforts together could ease the transition of former foster youth into their higher education career and create a stable living situation that can lead to educational success.

PRIOR VOTES

Senate Education Committee:	7 - 0
Assembly Floor:	77 - 0
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	14 - 0
Assembly Higher Education Committee:	9 - 0

POSITIONS

Support:

- John Burton Advocates for Youth (Co-Sponsor)
- Student Homes Coalition (Co-Sponsor)
- Uaspire (Co-Sponsor)
- Alliance for a Better Community
- Alliance for Children's Rights
- Allies for Every Child
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
- Aspiranet
- California Alliance of Caregivers
- California Alliance of Child and Family Services
- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
- California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association
- California Teachers 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
- Institute for College Access & Success; the
- Journey House
- Latino and Latina Roundtable of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley
- National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)
- Nextgen California
- Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools
- Ohlone College Nextup
- Orange County United Way
- Pasadena City College-next Up Program
- Public Advocates
- 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
Southern California College Attainment Network
Student Homes At SJSU
Student Homes At UCLA
Student Homes At UCSB
Student Homes At UCSD
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
UCLA Calkids Institute
University Housing Rights Organization at UC Berkeley
University of California
University of California Student Association
Youthbridge Housing

Oppose:

None received

-- END --