

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2768 (Ahrens) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

Policy Committee: Higher Education Vote: 10 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the California State University (CSU), each community college district (CCD), and private postsecondary educational institutions and independent institution of higher education (IHE), and requests the University of California (UC), to defer the unpaid portion of enrollment fees and costs, as defined, for a foster youth or former foster youth student until the student has received an initial disbursement of financial aid.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs of an unknown but potentially significant amount, approximately \$1 million to \$2 million, for CCDs, collectively statewide, to update policies regarding fee deferrals for eligible students. To the extent a CCD's existing policies meet the requirements of this bill costs would be less.
- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to the CSU, UC.

According to the CSU, many campuses already defer or waive these costs for foster and homeless youth.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

AB 2768 seeks to eliminate inequities in higher education by directly addressing financial barriers that disproportionately affect foster youth, a historically underrepresented and vulnerable student population. Foster youth tend to experience higher rates of housing instability, food insecurity, and financial insecurity compared to their peers, all of which can impede their ability to enroll and persist in college. Although tuition may be waived, many essential costs such as housing, meals, books, and required summer programs remain and are often due before financial aid is disbursed.

- 2) **Background.** At the start of an academic term, enrollment costs and fees may be due before a student receives a disbursement of financial aid. This can delay students' academic progress until such costs are paid. Current law waives systemwide tuition costs for foster youth students but does not waive campus-based costs. This bill expands that waiver to include all enrollment costs and fees, including but not limited to mandatory campus fees,

campus housing and meal costs, health insurance, books or materials, and any cost associated with a required summer course.

According to the CDE, there were 27,466 foster youth students attending K-12 public schools in the 2024-25 school year. However, foster youth graduate high school at a rate of 60% compared to 86% for non-foster youth. Speaking in support of this bill, the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools states “AB 2768 is a step in the right direction toward leveling the playing field for these students.”

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