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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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<b>Bill No:</b>	AB 2768	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	June 24, 2026
<b>Author:</b>	Ahrens		
<b>Version:</b>	June 15, 2026		
<b>Urgency:</b>	No	<b>Fiscal:</b>	Yes
<b>Consultant:</b>	Olgalilia Ramirez		

**Subject:** Student financial aid: waiver or deferment of fees and costs: foster youth.

## SUMMARY

This bill, commencing with the 2027-2028 academic year, requires California State University (CSU), each community college district, and private and independent institutions of higher education that receive state financial assistance and requests University of California (UC) to waive or defer the unpaid portion of enrollment fees and other costs for current or former foster youth upon initial enrollment until the student has received an initial disbursement of their financial aid award.

## BACKGROUND

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 California Community Colleges (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.)
- 2) Requires the CSU and each CCD, and requests the UC to, with respect to each campus in their respective jurisdictions that administers a priority enrollment system, grant priority in that system for registration for enrollment to a foster youth, former foster youth, homeless youth, or former homeless youth. Defines “foster youth” and “former foster youth” as a person in California whose dependency was established or continued by a court of competent jurisdiction, including a tribal court, on or after the youth’s 13th birthday and who is no older than 25 years of age at the commencement of the academic year. (EC § 66025.9)
- 3) Requests CCC campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth and priority access to year-round housing at no extra cost during breaks. (EC § 76010)
- 4) Requires CSU campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth and priority access to year-round housing at no extra cost during breaks. (EC § 90001.5)

- 5) Requires UC campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth, and priority access to year-round housing at no extra cost during breaks subject to the UC Regents issuing a resolution of approval. (EC § 92660)

## ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires, commencing with the 2027-2028 academic year, requires CSU, each community college district, private postsecondary educational institutions, and independent institutions of higher education to receive state financial assistance, and the UC is requested to waive or defer the unpaid portion of enrollment for current or former foster youth upon initial enrollment until the student has received an initial disbursement of their financial aid award. Enrollment fees and costs include, but are not limited to, all of the following:
  - a) Registration fees, including a statement of intent to register.
  - b) Mandatory campus fees.
  - c) Campus housing and meals, including any required deposits.
  - d) Health insurance.
  - e) Books, supplies, materials, and equipment that may be required for enrolled courses, except if an institution is unable to waive or defer these costs, it must provide the student with clear information regarding available campus resources, institutional programs, or community-based assistance to help the student cover those costs.
  - f) Any associated costs of a summer course or program required to be taken for the student's chosen major.
- 2) Encourages community college districts to use existing funding sources to implement the provisions of the bill, including NextUP Program funding and Student Equity and Achievement Program funding.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, "This bill holds deep personal significance for me, as I have firsthand experience navigating the foster care system and facing homelessness. My journey through the community college system and higher education played a transformative role in my life, providing me with the opportunities and support needed to build the career I have today. I am profoundly grateful for the access and resources that made this path possible.

"At the same time, my experiences have shown me that there are still gaps in support for students facing similar challenges. Many foster youth encounter barriers that make it difficult to navigate higher education, from financial instability to a lack of consistent guidance and resources. I believe there is more we can do

to ensure these students not only access college but also succeed once they are there.

“This bill reflects my commitment to strengthening those support systems. By addressing these gaps, it aims to make the college more accessible, navigable, and equitable for foster youth. Ultimately, it aligns with my goal of helping create a more supportive and empowering environment so that students with backgrounds like mine have every opportunity to thrive.”

- 2) **Who is eligible?** The bill applies to current and former foster youth, as defined in current law. Under that definition, an eligible student is a person whose dependency was established or continued by a court on or after the youth’s 13th birthday and who is no older than 25 years of age at the commencement of the academic year. This definition aligns eligibility for this benefit with other higher education programs and services available to foster youth.
- 3) **Financial barriers facing foster youth.** According to the author, foster youth often lack family financial support, savings, or access to credit to bridge the gap between when college costs are due and when financial aid is disbursed. While financial aid programs such as the Chafee Grant, Cal Grant, and tuition waivers are available to eligible foster youth, students may still be required to pay enrollment deposits, housing costs, fees, and other expenses before receiving their first financial aid disbursement. 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. A 2023 study, *Housing Insecurity and Homelessness Among College Students*, reports that housing insecurity and homelessness show a strong, statistically significant negative relationship with college completion rates, persistence, and credit attainment. This bill seeks to address those upfront financial costs by requiring institutions to waive or defer specified costs associated with college attendance until financial aid is disbursed.
- 4) **Existing supports for foster youth.** Existing law provides various supports to foster youth pursuing higher education, including priority registration, tuition assistance, financial aid, and priority access to campus housing. Current law also requires public higher education institutions to provide priority access for year-round campus housing at no extra cost during campus breaks. This bill expands those benefits by addressing a period of transition into college and the timing of enrollment related costs that foster youth may encounter when first enrolling in college.
- 5) **Costs eligible for waiver or deferral.** The bill requires public higher education institutions and private institutions receiving state assistance to waive or defer various costs during a foster youth’s initial enrollment, including enrollment fees, mandatory campus fees, housing and meal costs, health insurance, and required summer program expenses. The bill also includes books, supplies, materials, and equipment required for enrolled courses. Unlike many enrollment related

charges that are directly billed by an institution, books and supplies are often obtained through third party vendors and may not be costs that a campus can readily waive or defer. The bill permits institutions that are unable to waive or defer these costs to instead provide information regarding available campus resources, institutional programs or community based assistance. The author may wish to further clarify that health insurance costs apply to campus sponsored health insurance costs assessed by the institution.

- 6) **NextUp.** 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. This bill encourages community colleges to use NextUP funds to defer or waive costs associated with the implementation of this bill's requirements.

- 7) **Related legislation.**

AB 2766 (Ahrens, 2026) requires, instead of requests, housing priority at a CCC be granted to foster and homeless youth, and requires a CCC, CSU and requests 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. AB 2766 was heard and passed by this Committee on June 10 and is currently awaiting a hearing in the Senate Human Services Committee.

## SUPPORT

Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools (sponsor)  
 Alameda County Office of Education  
 Alliance for Children's Rights  
 Aspiranet  
 California Association of School Counselors

California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office  
California County Superintendents  
CFT – A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO  
Children Now  
County of Santa Clara  
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges  
Institute for College Access & Success; the  
Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Los Angeles Unified School District  
San Diego Unified School District  
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District  
University of California

**OPPOSITION**

None received

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