
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2768 (Ahrens) - Student financial aid: waiver or deferment of fees and costs: foster youth

Version: June 15, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill requires the California State University (CSU), community college districts, and private and independent institutions of higher education that receive state financial assistance, and requests the 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.

Fiscal Impact: The Chancellor's Office estimates General Fund costs of up to \$15,000 per district, or \$1.1 million statewide, to update policies deferring fees for foster youth students. These costs could be reduced to the extent that existing policies meet requirements of the bill. For example, some community college districts have policies that defer fees under "anticipated aid."

The UC and CSU indicate that the bill's costs would be minor and absorbable.

Background: Existing law requires the CSU and each community college district, 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.

Existing law requests community college campuses to give priority housing to foster and homeless youth and priority access to year-round housing at no extra cost during breaks.

Existing law 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.

Existing law 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.

Proposed Law: This bill 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.

This bill provides that enrollment fees and costs include, but are not limited to, all of the following: registration fees, including a statement of intent to register; mandatory campus fees; campus housing and meals, including any required deposits; health insurance; 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; and any associated costs of a summer course or program required to be taken for the student's chosen major.

This bill 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.

Related Legislation: AB 2766 (Ahrens, 2026) requires, instead of requests, housing priority at a community college be granted to foster and homeless youth, and requires CSU and community colleges, and requests UC, to waive or defer housing costs for foster and homeless youth until they have received their financial aid disbursement. AB 2766 is pending in this committee.

Staff Comments: 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 is intended to address a period of transition into college and the timing of enrollment related costs that foster youth may encounter when first enrolling in college. Specifically, 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.

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