
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 2768
Author: Ahrens (D), et al.
Amended: 8/13/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/24/26

AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Reyes

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0, 5/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Student financial aid: waiver or deferment of fees and costs: foster youth

SOURCE: Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

DIGEST: 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 unpaid portion of enrollment fees or other costs, or defer fees or costs until the student has received an initial disbursement of their financial aid award for current or former foster youth upon initial enrollment.

ANALYSIS:

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 Community College District (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)

This bill:

- 1) Requires, commencing with the 2027-2028 academic year, 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 unpaid portion of enrollment fees or other costs, or defer those fees or costs until the student has received an initial disbursement of their financial aid award for current or former foster youth upon initial enrollment. 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 this bill, including NextUP Program funding and Student Equity and Achievement Program funding.

Comments

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."

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.

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.

Costs eligible for waiver or deferral. This 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. This 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 cost that a campus can readily waive or defer. This 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.

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

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis, this bill would have the following 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/15/26)

Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools (source)

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

Indivisible CA State Strong

Los Angeles County Office of Education

Los Angeles Unified School District

Placer County Office of Education

San Bernardino Community College District

San Diego Unified School District

San Jose-Evergreen Community College District

The Institute for College Access & Success

University of California

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/15/16)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0, 5/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon,

Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez

Prepared by: Olgalilia Ramirez / ED. / (916) 651-4105
8/17/26 10:54:46

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