

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 2768 (Ahrens)

As Amended August 13, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires California State University (CSU), each California Community College (CCC) district, and private and independent institutions of higher education that receive state financial assistance and requests University of California (UC) commencing with the 2027-2028 academic year, 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.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Request CCC districts to use existing funding sources to implement the measure, including, but not limited to, funding received pursuant to the NextUp program, as specified.
- 2) Make clarifying changes to require CSU, CCC, and private and independent institutions of higher education to either waive the unpaid portion of enrollment fees and costs or defer the unpaid portion of enrollment fees and costs, as specified.

COMMENTS

Addressing timing gaps in financial aid. Financial aid is often disbursed after the start of the academic term, while enrollment-related costs are due earlier. This timing misalignment can disproportionately impact foster youth, who may lack financial resources or family support to bridge the gap. This measure appears to address said gap by requiring institutions to defer payment until aid is received.

Scope of covered costs. This measure applies broadly to multiple categories of student expenses, including tuition, housing, food, and educational materials. By including non-tuition costs, the measure recognizes that barriers to enrollment extend beyond registration fees and may include basic living and academic readiness expenses.

NextUp Program. 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.

According to the Author

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."

The author further states that, "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 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."

Lastly the author states, "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. By allowing these costs to be deferred during a student's first term, the bill removes a key structural barrier and ensures that foster youth have equitable access to the same opportunities as other students."

Arguments in Support

According to the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools (Edwin Gomez, Ed.D.), the sponsor of this measure, "foster youth face unique and significant educational challenges, including lower rates of academic achievement, graduation, attendance, and post-secondary attainment. According to the California Department of Education, only 60% of foster youth graduate high school, compared to 86% of non-foster youth. Frequent placement and school changes further disrupt learning, often resulting in the loss of critical academic documents and progress."

Dr. Gomez goes on to state that, "AB 2768 would allow first-term foster youth students to defer payment of essential enrollment costs—including the Statement of Intent to Register (SIR), any summer coursework or programs required for a student's declared major, on-campus housing deposits, and the purchase of textbooks—until their financial aid is available. While California has taken important steps to support foster youth by waiving *systemwide* tuition, tuition waivers do not cover campus-based costs. These expenses can create substantial obstacles that delay enrollment, set the students behind in their studies, and/or force foster youth students to alter their academic plans. AB 2768 is a step in the right direction toward leveling the playing field for these students."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) The CCC 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."
- 2) The UC and CSU indicate that the bill's costs would be minor and absorbable.

VOTES:

ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 10-0-0

YES: Fong, DeMaio, Boerner, Macedo, Jackson, Muratsuchi, Patel, Ramos, Sharp-Collins, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0-2

YES: 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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez

SENATE FLOOR: 40-0-0

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNeerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

UPDATED

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