

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2769 (Ahrens) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

Policy Committee: Human Services

Vote: 6 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill allows specified nonminors to maintain eligibility for the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) beyond their 18th birthday while they complete high school or vocational or technical training.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Extends AAP eligibility to a nonminor who is 18 years of age, is under an adoption assistance agreement that became effective before the nonminor's 16th birthday, and was, prior to attaining 18 years of age, attending high school or an equivalent program full-time, and meets other requirements. Specifies that a nonminor described in this paragraph is eligible until the date of completion of the program they are attending or the nonminor's 19th birthday, whichever occurs first.
- 2) Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), to the extent federal financial participation is unavailable, to ensure that state-realigned funding is available for those payments, consistent with existing law.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund (GF) costs of an unknown amount, potentially in the low- to mid-hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to CDSS to provide AAP benefits to the expanded population. CDSS indicates exact costs are difficult to determine due to the lack of data on the AAP caseload by age.
- 2) Ongoing county administrative costs (GF) of an unknown amount for county child welfare agencies to implement this proposal. Counties currently administer the high school completion rule for a related program and may benefit from the existing framework. Although these county costs are state-mandated costs, they are not reimbursable but instead must be funded by the state pursuant to Proposition 30. Proposition 30 (2012) requires legislation enacted after September 30, 2012, that has an overall effect of increasing the costs already borne by a local agency for programs or levels of service mandated by realignment (including child welfare services and foster care) to apply to local agencies only to the extent the state provides annual funding for the cost increase.

- 3) One-time automation costs of \$850,000 (GF) for changes to the Child Welfare Services-California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS-CARES) to provide a new aid code to account for this population.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

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

[This bill] seeks to improve educational outcomes for youth formerly in foster care by creating parity between the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) and the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) program. It permits youth adopted before age 16 and still enrolled in high school to receive AAP benefits past age 18 until they graduate or reach age 19.

- 2) **Background.** California's AAP provides monthly cash payments and Medi-Cal coverage to families who adopt children with special needs from foster care. The AAP rate is negotiated with each family and is based on the child's needs and family's circumstances. AAP payments go directly to the adoptive parents, unlike extended foster care payments, which go directly to a foster youth.

Under the AAP Financial support continues until the child reaches age 18, unless a mental or physical disability creates eligibility until the age of 21, or the child is under 21 but was 16 at the time the adoption assistance agreement went into effect. Youth whose agreements were entered into earlier in childhood, often in infancy or early childhood, are ineligible for extended aid.

This bill allows AAP recipients who turned 18 years of age while enrolled in high school or an equivalent program full-time, whose AAP agreement became effective before their 16th birthday, to remain eligible for AAP benefits until they complete high school or turn 19 years of age, whichever occurs first.

Under federal law, the youth impacted by this bill are ineligible for extended AAP benefits, thus the cost of extending benefits pursuant to this bill must be funded by the state GF.

According to the Alliance for Children's Rights:

[This bill] ensures fairness and consistency between youth supported in permanency in AAP and Kin-GAP by removing an arbitrary disparity based solely on the permanency pathway. By allowing AAP youth the same short-term extension already available to Kin-GAP youth, the bill provides stability during the critical transition to adulthood and ensures students and families do not lose financial support before completing their high school education. Counties already administer the high school completion rule for Kin-GAP, and can readily apply the same framework to AAP, minimizing implementation challenges.

- 3) **Prior Legislation.** AB 2255 (Joe Patterson), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, would have expanded eligibility for AAP benefits to age 26, and was much broader than this bill. AB 2255 was held on this committee's suspense file.

Analysis Prepared by: Jennifer Swenson / APPR. / (916) 319-2081