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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 673 **Hearing Date:** June 17, 2026  
**Author:** Jackson  
**Version:** June 8, 2026  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Therresa Austin

**Subject:** Unaccompanied homeless pupils: Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program.

**Note:** This bill has been referred to the Committees on Education and *Human Services*. A “do pass” motion should include referral to the Committee on *Human Services*.

## SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program to provide supports necessary to improve school attendance, pupil engagement, pupil graduation rates, and pupil wellbeing for unaccompanied youth who are 16 and 17 years of age.

## BACKGROUND

Existing federal law:

- 1) Defines, in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act), “homeless children and youths” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes:
  - a) Children who are sharing the housing of others due to economic hardship, are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations, are living in emergency or transitional shelters, or are abandoned in hospitals;
  - b) Children who have a primary nighttime residence not designed or ordinarily used for sleeping;
  - c) Children who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
  - d) Migratory children who are living in the circumstances described above. (United States Code (USC) Title 42 § 11434(a))
- 2) Defines “unaccompanied youth” to include a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. (USC Title 42 § 11434(a))
- 3) Requires each local educational agency (LEA) to designate a local liaison for homeless children and youth who, among other duties, is responsible for

ensuring that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies, and ensuring that homeless families and homeless children and youth have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youth are eligible. (USC Title 42 § 11432(g))

- 4) Provides a homeless student with specific rights and protections, including the right to immediate enrollment, and the right to continue education at the student's school of origin for the duration of the student's homelessness, according to the child's or youth's best interest. (USC Title 42 § 11432 (g))

Existing state law:

- 5) Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Department of Social Services (CDSS) to identify representatives from the CDE, CDSS, and other state agencies who have experience in homeless youth issues to develop policies and practices to support homeless children and youth and to ensure that child abuse and neglect reporting requirements do not create barriers to the school enrollment and attendance of homeless children or youth. (Education Code (EC) § 48850)
- 6) Requires an LEA to ensure that each school within the LEA identifies all homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled at the school by administering a housing questionnaire. (EC § 48851)
- 7) Requires the CDE to provide training materials to LEA liaisons to assist them with providing professional development and other support to school personnel providing services pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act. (EC § 48852.5)
- 8) Requires a school district, charter school, or county office of education (COE) to create a website containing the list of LEA liaisons for pupils in foster care and pupils who are homeless with contact information, and information on homelessness, including educational rights and resources in that school district, charter school, or COE. (EC § 48852.6)

## **ANALYSIS**

This bill:

- 1) Requires the CDE to administer formula grants as part of a pilot program, to be known as the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program, to LEAs for the purposes of providing supports necessary to improve school attendance, pupil engagement, pupil graduation rates, and pupil wellbeing for unaccompanied youth who are 16 and 17 years of age, including connecting youth with resources to find stable housing.
- 2) Requires that the grant funds be awarded to LEAs and be available for expenditure for five years from the date of receipt.
- 3) Specifies the eligible uses of the grant to include all of the following:

- a) Supporting connections and establishing referrals to existing community-based organizations, licensed youth shelter programs, county welfare departments, and local continuums of care to enable pupils to access housing navigation services, social services, child welfare services, and family stabilization services administered by those entities.
  - b) Providing basic needs, including items such as clothing, food, and stipends for transportation.
  - c) Providing educational support services and tutoring provided directly by the LEA or through a partner nonprofit or service provider.
  - d) Providing employment readiness and skills development, including skills related to independent living.
  - e) Supporting connections and establishing referrals to health, behavioral health, and other supportive services.
- 4) Requires an LEA to have identified at least one unaccompanied youth enrolled during the prior fiscal year as reported in the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) in order to be eligible to apply for grant funds.
  - 5) Requires an LEA applying to receive a grant to submit an application to the CDE in the form and manner prescribed by the CDE.
  - 6) Requires an application for grant funding to include all of the following information:
    - a) A description of the LEA;
    - b) A description of existing partnerships between the LEA and other agencies or organizations to support unaccompanied youth, as applicable;
    - c) A description of how grant funds will be used to identify eligible pupils, the types of supports to be provided based on eligible uses of grant funds, and the performance measures that the LEA will use to measure progress towards program goals; and
    - d) The number of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youth, as those terms are defined under the federal McKinney-Vento Act, enrolled within the LEA during the prior fiscal year, as reported in CALPADS.
  - 7) Authorizes the CDE to establish additional application requirements or criteria necessary to ensure effective program administration, accountability, and equitable geographic distribution of grant awards consistent with the purpose of the program and the eligible grant uses.

- 8) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), commencing with the 2028-29 fiscal year, and subject to an appropriation in the annual Budget Act for these purposes, to allocate funding to LEAs, or a consortium of LEAs that have submitted an application and been determined eligible to receive an Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant.
- 9) Requires the SPI to reserve 30% of the total funds appropriated for the program in any fiscal year to be distributed to all participating LEAs or consortiums of LEAs as a base grant.
- 10) Requires the SPI, after reserving and allocating the base grant amounts, to allocate the remaining 70% of the total funds based on a weighted formula using the following metrics:
  - a) 70% of the allocation shall be based on the proportionate number of unaccompanied homeless youth identified within the LEA or consortium of LEAs in the prior fiscal year.
  - b) 20% of the allocation shall be based on indicators of concentrated need within the territory served by a LEA or consortium of LEAs, as determined by the SPI based on all of the following metrics:
    - i) The rate of chronic absenteeism among homeless pupils.
    - ii) The percentage of identified homeless children and youths, as defined under the McKinney-Vento Act, enrolled within the LEA or consortium of LEAs that exceeds the statewide average of homeless pupil enrollment.
  - c) 10% of the allocation shall be based on the structural scale and geographic barriers of the applicant, including the number of districts within the county and the documented capacity of the LEA to coordinate regional housing and supportive services.
- 11) Requires the SPI, on or before October 31 of each fiscal year, to submit a report detailing the final funding allocations made according to the criteria listed in #9 and #10 above to the California Department of Finance (DOF), the State Board of Education (SBE), and the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature for oversight and review.
- 12) Requires an LEA that has been awarded Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant funds to submit an annual report to the CDE, in the form and manner prescribed by the CDE, describing the expenditure of the funds, the number and characteristics of unaccompanied youth served by the grant, the services and housing provided, and measurable outcomes related to housing stability, school attendance, and educational attainment.
- 13) Requires the CDE, upon completion of the five-year grant cycle, to submit a report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature, as

- specified, evaluating program outcomes and recommending whether the program should be expanded or made permanent.
- 14) Authorizes the CDE to implement the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program through management bulletins or similar letters of instruction.
  - 15) Defines the following terms for the purposes of this bill:
    - a) “Local educational agency” means a school district, COE, or charter school.
    - b) “Nonprofit” means a nonprofit public benefit corporation.
    - c) “Program” means the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program.
    - d) “Unaccompanied youth” means a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Act.
  - 16) Makes a series of legislative findings and declarations related to the challenges and barriers that children experiencing homelessness face in their academic success.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “As the author of AB 673, I am committed to addressing the critical issue of homelessness among unaccompanied youth in California. These vulnerable minors often face significant challenges as they navigate life without the support of a parent or guardian, including limited access to safe housing, education, and essential services. This bill aims to provide a tangible solution by establishing the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program which will offer five-year grants to fund referrals to housing supports, provisions of basic needs, educational supports, employment readiness, and supportive services.  
  
“By implementing this program, we can offer unaccompanied youth the opportunity to rebuild their lives, pursue their education, and contribute to their communities. California cannot afford to ignore the plight of these young people, and it is our responsibility to ensure they have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.”
- 2) ***Unaccompanied homeless youth.*** The McKinney-Vento Act defines “homeless children and youths” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes:
  - a) Children who are sharing the housing of others due to economic hardship, are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations, are living in emergency or transitional shelters, or are abandoned in hospitals;

- b) Children who have a primary nighttime residence not designed or ordinarily used for sleeping;
- c) Children who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- d) Migratory children who are living in the circumstances described above.

An *unaccompanied* homeless youth is “a homeless child or youth [meeting the definition above] not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.” Physical custody refers to where a child or youth is physically living. Therefore, a child or youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, is a child or youth who is not living with a parent or guardian.

According to a 2025 brief from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), “Each year, as required by the U.S. Department of Education, school districts and states work together to collect and report data on the public school enrollment of CYEH, including unaccompanied youth. During school year 2022–23 school year, U.S. public schools enrolled 123,972 unaccompanied youth, with 86% residing in doubled-up situations where they shared housing with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (NCHE, 2024). The number of unaccompanied youth enrolled in U.S. public schools in SY 2022–23 represents a 31% increase from SY 2020–21, which showed an enrollment of 94,363 unaccompanied youth (NCHE, 2024). And yet, these data represent only school-age unaccompanied youth who were enrolled in U.S. public schools and identified by the school as an unaccompanied youth. Actual numbers of unaccompanied youth have varied widely over the years depending on the age criteria, homelessness definition, and methodology used. Research from the 2018 Voices of Youth Count initiative estimates that roughly 700,000 youth between the ages of 13 to 17 and 3.5 million youth between the ages of 18 to 25 may experience homelessness over a 12-month period (Morton et al., 2018).”

According to the CDE, in 2024-25, there were 298,254 California public school students who met the federal definition of homelessness, of which 9,723 are reported as unaccompanied homeless students.

- 3) ***McKinney-Vento Act LEA liaisons.*** The federal McKinney-Vento Act requires every LEA, including school districts, COEs, charter schools, and special education local plan areas (SELPA), to designate an appropriate person as a liaison to support children and youth experiencing homelessness. LEA liaisons play a critical role in ensuring compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act, helping families navigate the school system, and furthering the McKinney-Vento Act’s goal of ensuring equal access to a free, appropriate public education. LEA liaisons are responsible for ensuring the following:
  - a) Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;

- b) Homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that LEA;
- c) Homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs), early intervention services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (USC Title 20 § 1431 et seq.), and other preschool programs administered by the LEA;
- d) Homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
- e) The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- f) Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of such children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths;
- g) Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act;
- h) School personnel providing services under this part receive professional development and other support; and
- i) The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.

LEA liaisons also have special obligations to support unaccompanied youth specifically. Unaccompanied youth have the right to immediate enrollment without proof of guardianship. LEA liaisons must help unaccompanied youth select a school of attendance, receive transportation to and from the school of origin, and obtain a prompt and fair resolution of any disputes. LEA liaisons must also inform unaccompanied youth of their status as “independent” students for the purpose of applying to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and help verify their status.

As noted in CDE’s 2019 guidance document on designating LEA liaisons, “a careful reading of all the duties described in the law reveals the difficulty of a single staff member being able to carry out all of these duties without significant support.” Statute only requires that one liaison be designated for each LEA;

however, some LEAs have gone further by following the nationally recognized best practice of designating a staff person at each schoolsite.

- 4) ***The federal Education for Homeless Children and Youths program.*** California receives federal funding to serve homeless youth and children through the Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY) Program—a formula grant made to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico based on each state’s share of Title I, Part A, funds, which include McKinney-Vento. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the EHCY, among other things, supports an office for coordination of the education of homeless children and youths in each state, which gathers comprehensive information about homeless children and youths and the impediments they must overcome to regularly attend school. These grants also help state educational agencies ensure that homeless children, including preschoolers and youths, have equal access to free and appropriate public education. States must review and revise laws and practices that impede such equal access. States are required to have an approved plan for addressing problems associated with the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children in school. States must make competitive subgrants to LEAs to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youths. This includes addressing problems due to transportation needs, immunization and residency requirements, lack of birth certificates and school records, and guardianship issues. Using subgrant funds, LEAs may offer such activities as coordination and collaboration with other local agencies to provide comprehensive services to homeless children and youths and their families. LEAs also offer expedited evaluations of the needs of homeless children to help them enroll in school, attend regularly, and achieve success.

In California, these subgrants are awarded on a three-year grant cycle, with the most recent grant term spanning between July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2027. According to the CDE, this most recent cycle resulted in the distribution of nearly \$14.5M across 151 LEAs. In receiving the funds, the LEAs are required to do the following:

- a) Use countywide homeless education data to target professional development activities, build awareness, and address the homeless education needs of LEAs in the county.
  - b) Provide professional development and technical assistance to all homeless liaisons within the county, including charter schools.
  - c) Develop memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with various stakeholders.
  - d) Create and disseminate homeless education materials and resources.
- 5) ***Providing support to unaccompanied youth.*** This bill establishes the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program to allow LEAs to provide necessary support to improve school attendance, pupil engagement, pupil graduation rates, and pupil wellbeing for unaccompanied youth who are 16 and 17 years of age, including connecting youth with resources to find stable housing.

This bill, as originally heard in the Assembly Education Committee, would have allowed LEAs to use grant funds to partner with local nonprofits to fund transitional housing projects for unaccompanied homeless youth and provide direct payments to housing providers. The bill was scaled back due to concerns about the appropriateness of an LEA directly or indirectly providing housing to a minor; the lack of guardrails regarding the need for adult supervision in the proposed housing settings; and the potential to duplicate existing programs.

Now, it allows funds to be used to support connections with appropriate existing county services, continuums of care, and community-based organizations which are better equipped to facilitate access to housing navigation services, social services, child welfare services, and family stabilization services.

It also importantly authorizes the use of funds to address other critical factors that impact a student's long-term stability, such as food, clothing, and transportation, educational support services and tutoring, and employment readiness and skills development, including skills related to independent living.

- 6) **Committee amendments.** While the bill no longer authorizes LEAs to use Youth Support Grant funding to provide housing outright, it still contains some provisions within the reporting requirements that may cause confusion. As such, the Committee recommends that the bill be amended as follows:

- Strike the requirement for LEAs to report on the housing it provided using the grant program from the annual report to the CDE.

- 7) **Prior and related legislation.**

AB 373 (Gipson, Chapter 327, Statutes of 2023) requires an LEA operating an intersession program to grant priority access to homeless and foster children and youth.

AB 408 (Quirk-Silva, Chapter 904, Statutes of 2022) requires LEAs to establish homeless education program policies consistent with federal law, requires homeless education liaisons to offer training to specified school staff, and requires the CDE to develop a risk-based monitoring plan for homeless education requirements.

AB 2375 (Luz Rivas, Chapter 912, Statutes of 2022) requires LEAs and charter schools to identify all homeless children and youth and unaccompanied youth enrolled at the school by administering a housing questionnaire based on specified best practices.

SB 532 (Caballero, Chapter 918, Statutes of 2022) expands the rights for foster youth, homeless youth, former juvenile court school students, children of military families, migratory children, and students participating in a newcomer program (highly mobile students) to be exempted from local graduation requirements if certain conditions are met; requires LEAs to provide these students the option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework

requirements if certain conditions are met; specifies the contents of transcripts when transferred to a new LEA; and requires LEAs to annually report to the CDE on the number of students, who in the prior school year, graduated with an exemption from the LEA's local graduation requirements.

**SUPPORT**

State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Thurmond (sponsor)  
Alameda County Office of Education  
Alameda County Office of Education Youth Advisory Board  
California Alliance of Child and Family Services  
California Apartment Association  
California Behavioral Health Association  
California Teachers Association  
California Youth Empowerment Network  
End Child Poverty CA Powered by Grace  
Fresno Unified School District

**OPPOSITION**

None received

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