
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 673

Author: Jackson

Version: June 18, 2026

Urgency: No

Consultant: Naima Ford Antal

Hearing Date: June 29, 2026

Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Unaccompanied homeless pupils: Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program

SUMMARY

This bill creates the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program to be administered by the California Department of Education (CDE) to fund supportive services for unaccompanied youth who are 16 or 17 years of age to improve school attendance, pupil engagement, pupil graduation rates, and pupil wellbeing, including connecting youth with resources to find stable housing.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Requires each local educational agency 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. *(42 United States Code [USC] 11432(g))*
- 2) 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. *(42 USC 11432 (g))*
- 3) Defines, in the federal McKinney-Vento Act Homeless Assistance Act, "homeless children and youth" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children who are sharing the housing of other people, living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds, emergency or transitional shelters, abandoned in hospitals or awaiting foster care placement, or who are living in a place not generally used for sleeping, such as cars, parks, public places, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, and migratory children living in the circumstances above. *(42 USC 11434(a)(2))*

- 4) Makes findings and declarations establishing the Homeless Youth Act of 2018 to improve prevention and early intervention services for youth at risk of experiencing homelessness and increase access to services for youth experiencing homelessness. (*Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] 8259*)
- 5) Defines “homeless youth” as unaccompanied youth between 12 and 24 years old who are experiencing homelessness as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. It also includes youth that are pregnant or parenting. (*WIC 8260(d)*)
- 6) Requires a local education agency to ensure that each school within the local education agency identifies all homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled at the school by administering a housing questionnaire. (*Education Code 48851*)

This Bill:

- 1) Makes findings and declarations about the challenges faced by unaccompanied youth.
- 2) Defines “Local educational agency” to mean a school district, county office of education, or charter school.
- 3) Defines “Nonprofit” to mean a nonprofit public benefit corporation.
- 4) Defines “Program” to mean the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program.
- 5) Defines “Unaccompanied youth” as a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- 6) Establishes the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program to be administered by the Department of Education to local educational agencies for the purpose of providing the supports necessary to improve school attendance, pupil engagement, pupil graduation rates, and pupil wellbeing for unaccompanied youth who are 16 or 17 years of age, including connecting youth with resources to find stable housing.
- 7) Requires grants to be distributed to local educational agency or a consortium of local educational agencies and be available for five years.
- 8) Provides that grant funds can be used for:
 - 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 eligible pupils to access the housing navigation services, social services, child welfare services, and family stabilization services administered by those entities.
 - b. Providing basic needs, including clothing, food, and stipends for transportation.
 - c. Providing educational support services and tutoring provided directly by the local educational agency 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.
- 9) Requires a local educational agency to identify at least one unaccompanied youth enrolled during the prior fiscal year as reported in the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System in order to be eligible for the grant.
- 10) Requires a local educational agency applying to receive a grant to submit an application to the department in the form and manner required by CDE.
- 11) Requires the application to include all of the following information:
 - a. A description of the local educational agency.
 - b. A description of existing partnerships between the local educational agency 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 the eligible uses of grant funds, and the performance measures the local educational agency will use to measure progress towards program goals.
 - d. The number of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youth, as those terms are defined under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act enrolled within the local educational agency during the prior fiscal year.
- 12) Allows 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 and the eligible grant uses.
- 13) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction, commencing in the 2028- 2029 fiscal year, to allocate funding to local educational agencies, or consortia of local educational agencies, that have submitted applications and been determined eligible to receive a grant, upon appropriation in the budget.
- 14) Requires the Superintendent to reserve 30 percent of the total funds appropriated for the program in any given fiscal year to be distributed to all participating local educational agencies or consortia of local educational agencies as base grants.
- 15) Provides that after the distribution of the 30 percent, the Superintendent shall allocate the remaining funding based on a weighted formula using the following metrics:
 - a. Seventy percent of the allocation shall be based on the proportionate number of unaccompanied youth identified within the local educational agency or the consortium of local educational agencies in the prior fiscal year.

- b. Twenty percent of the allocation shall be based on indicators of concentrated need within the territory served by the local educational agency or the consortium of local educational agencies, as determined by the Superintendent based on both 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 federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, enrolled within the local educational agency or the consortium of local educational agencies that exceeds the statewide average percentage of homeless pupil enrollment.
 - c. Ten percent of the allocation shall be based on the structural scale and geographic barriers of the applicant, including the number of school districts within the county and the documented capacity of the local educational agency to coordinate regional housing and supportive services.
- 16) Requires, on or before October 31 of each fiscal year, the Superintendent to submit a report detailing the final funding allocations made pursuant to this bill to the Department of Finance, the State Board of Education, and the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature for oversight and review.
- 17) Requires a local educational agency awarded grant funds under the program to submit an annual report to the department, in the form and manner prescribed by the department, describing the expenditure of funds, the number and characteristics of unaccompanied youth served, the services provided, and measurable outcomes related to housing stability, school attendance, and educational attainment.
- 18) Requires CDE, upon completion of the five-year grant cycle, to submit a report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code, evaluating program outcomes and recommending whether the program should be expanded or made permanent.
- 19) Allows CDE to implement this section through management bulletins or similar letters of instruction.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) According to the CDE, this bill necessitates the creation of a new housing office within the department creating approximately \$844,334 in ongoing General Fund costs to support an additional four staff to oversee administration of the grant program. However, it is unclear to the committee whether the new administrative workload imposed by this bill warrants four additional staff.

- 2) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressures of an unknown but likely significant amount, potentially in the millions to tens of millions of dollars, to fund the first five-year cycle of pilot grants.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of 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. I respectfully ask for your support for this critical piece of legislation.”

Homeless Youth

There are many definitions of homeless youth found within federal code and state code related to program eligibility. For example, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act defines “homeless youth” as individuals who are less than 21 years of age and for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement. This definition only includes those youth who are unaccompanied by families or caregivers. Through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the federal government defines “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children who are sharing the housing of other people, living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds, emergency or transitional shelters, abandoned in hospitals or awaiting foster care placement, or who are living in a place not generally used for sleeping such as cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, and migratory children living in the circumstances above.

Another subsection of homeless youth, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act is “unaccompanied youth”. These are youth experiencing homelessness, as defined above, and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. As such, the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homeless children and youth may include both those youth experiencing homelessness with their family or caregiver and those youth experiencing homelessness alone. Unaccompanied youth are captured as a unique subset of data in the annual United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time Count. This bill creates a grant program to specifically help unaccompanied youth that are 16 to 17 years old.

A 2020 report¹ by University of California, Los Angeles' Center for the Transformation of Schools found that students experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity tended to be disproportionately Latinx and African American and faced poorer academic outcomes than their housing secure peers. These poor outcomes included: higher chronic absenteeism, lower graduation rates, reduced higher education readiness, and increased suspension rates. They found that “young people seeking services at homeless drop-in centers struggle to identify trusted adults in their lives, and share common challenges around having their basic needs met, including a predictable income, housing, clean clothes, and food.” The study also discussed policy implications for the rise in children experiencing homelessness and provided several suggestions, namely that better outcomes can only occur by both increasing coordination among the different entities that students experiencing homelessness interact with and improving access to targeted resources and services for children and families.

Federal law says children experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children. Schools must implement strategies to remove barriers faced by children experiencing homelessness which include lack of transportation, lack of awareness of support services, stigmas, truancy, and challenges that come with a lack of resources. AB 408 (*Quirk- Silva, Chapter 904, Statutes of 2022*) required schools to establish homeless education policies to comply with federal law and create a homeless education liaison position. Schools must also ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are identified through outreach and coordination activities. Identification activities include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating with community services agencies, such as shelters, soup kitchens, food banks, street outreach teams, drop-in centers, welfare and housing agencies, public health departments, and faith-based organizations.
- Avoiding using the word "homeless" in initial contacts with school personnel, families, or youth.
- Developing and implement a districtwide identification form and put it in each registration packet.
- Conducting family nights to offer health checks, services, and resources.
- Providing outreach materials and posters where there is a frequent influx of low-income families and youth in high-risk situations, including motels and campgrounds.

This bill would create the Unaccompanied Youth Grant Support Program that can give schools funding to offer basic needs services, build partnerships with relevant organizations and provide other resources to young people experiencing homelessness.

Data on Youth Homelessness in California

Most homelessness data stems from the HUD Point in Time Count. Annually, HUD directs local community Continuums of Care to conduct a Point in Time Count of people experiencing homelessness in January, and includes people experiencing homelessness who are “sheltered” – living in temporary shelters – and those who are “unsheltered,” or living out in the open or in places not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for people (i.e. the streets, vehicles, or parks). The Point in Time Count is required by HUD as a condition

¹ <https://transformschoools.ucla.edu/research/state-of-crisis/>

of receiving federal funding and captures homeless children and youth data in two ways, through reporting numbers on homeless families with children and reporting numbers on unaccompanied homeless youth. According to HUD, counting unaccompanied youth is very challenging because this population is less likely to use residential services, they congregate away from adults experiencing homelessness, and often hide from law enforcement because they are minors. In the 2025 Point in Time Count, California was reported to have 8,086 unaccompanied homeless youth, which is a decrease from 2024 when the Point in Time Count identified 9,052 unaccompanied homeless youth.

California also uses the Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS), to gather data on the needs of people experiencing homelessness and changing demographics. The HDIS is a compilation of data reported by Continuums of Care to their county Homelessness Management Information Systems about the services they have provided to people experiencing homelessness. This means HDIS data is limited only to what is provided by service providers who use the Homelessness Management Information System. Potential gaps include providers to the 110 federally recognized Tribes and domestic violence victims, because they are not required to use the system. Despite the potential gaps in data, California is the only state to create such a data warehouse based on Homelessness Management Information System data. The advantages of using this warehouse of data includes its ability to show “patterns of service usage across geographic regions and support[s] efforts to identify and address racial and other inequalities among people experiencing homelessness.”² According to HDIS data, in 2025, 75,696 individuals under the age of 18 years old and 27,088 people age 18- to 24-year-old accessed homeless support services.

According to the California Department of Education, 298,254 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in the 2024- 2025 school year and 9,723 were unaccompanied youth. This bill relies on unaccompanied youth and homeless youth data reported by schools, among other criteria, to determine the distribution of grant funds. It also requires data to be collected on the number and demographics of the students that use the funds.

Related/Prior 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, youth and unaccompanied youth enrolled at the school by administering a housing questionnaire based on specified best practices.

² California Interagency Council on Homelessness' Statewide Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California. December 2024.

SB 918 (Weiner, Chapter 841, Statutes 2018) created Homeless Youth Act of 2018, which adds new responsibilities related to homeless youth to the Homeless Coordinating and Financing and Cal- ICH.

COMMENTS

This bill creates the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program that gives local education agencies funding to enhance their support for 16- and 17-year-old unaccompanied youth. There are many state, county, and private local resources to help families and children experiencing homelessness. School is a resource that homeless children are entitled to by law and is in every community, making it an effective place for children and youth to get support for their basic needs as well as their educational ones. It can also be a place for families to get connected to resources. This bill creates a grant program that prioritizes schools with the most need and also schools with the capacity to coordinate regional housing and supportive services.

PRIOR VOTES

Senate Education Committee:	4 - 2
Assembly Floor:	61 - 1
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11 - 0
Assembly Education Committee:	7 - 0

POSITIONS

Support:

California Department of Education (Sponsor)
Alameda County Office of Education
California Apartment Association

Oppose:

None received

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