
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: AB 2306
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Urgency: No
Consultant: Lynn Lorber
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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: High school graduation requirements: pupils transferring from juvenile court schools

SUMMARY

This bill requires a school district to exempt a student who transfers from a juvenile court school any time after completion of grade 10 from local graduation requirements that are in addition to the coursework required by the State.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires students to successfully complete specified courses as a condition of graduating from high school, and authorizes school districts to impose coursework requirements that are in addition to those prescribed by the State. (Education Code § 51225.3)
- 2) Requires school districts to exempt a student in foster care or a student who is homeless, who transfers between schools any time after the completion of the student's second year of high school, from all locally-imposed graduation requirements. (EC § 51225.1(a))
- 3) Excludes students from this exemption if the school district makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the local graduation requirements in time to graduate by the end of the student's fourth year of high school. (EC § 51225.1(a))
- 4) Requires school districts to notify, within 30 calendar days of the date the foster youth transfers into a school, the student, the person holding educational rights, and the student's social worker or probation officer of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies. (EC § 51225.1(d))
- 5) Requires school districts to notify, within 30 calendar days of the date the homeless youth transfers into a school, the student, the person holding educational rights, and the local educational agency (LEA) liaison for homeless youth of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies. (EC § 51225.1(d))

- 6) Requires schools to continue to apply the exemption for a foster youth after the termination of the court's jurisdiction, and for a homeless student if the student is no longer homeless, while the student is enrolled in that school or if the student transfers to another school or school district. (EC § 51225.1(j))
- 7) Establishes juvenile court schools, administered by county boards of education, to provide public schools in juvenile halls, juvenile homes, day centers, juvenile ranches, juvenile camps, regional youth educational facilities or in any group home housing 25 or more youth. (EC § 48645, et seq.)
- 8) Requires each school district and county office of education to accept for credit full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by a student while attending a public school, juvenile court school, or non-public school or agency. (EC § 48645.5)
- 9) Requires the school district of residence to issue a diploma of graduation from the school the student last attended, if a student completes the graduation requirement of his or her school district of residence while being detained. Existing law authorizes, in the alternative, the county superintendent of schools to issue the diploma. (EC § 48645.5)
- 10) Requires the county office of education and probation department to have a joint transition planning policy that includes collaboration with local educational agencies to improve communication regarding dates of release and the educational needs of students who have had contact with the juvenile justice system; to coordinate immediate school placement and enrollment; and to ensure that probation officers in the community have the information they need to support the return of pupils who are being transferred from juvenile court schools to public schools in their communities. (EC § 48647)

ANALYSIS

This bill requires a school district to exempt a student who transfers from a juvenile court school any time after completion of grade 10 from local graduation requirements that are in addition to the coursework required by the State. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires a school district to exempt a former juvenile court school student who transfers between schools any time after the completion of the student's second year of high school from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the governing board that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements.
- 2) Provides that a school district is not required to exempt a former juvenile court school student from local graduation requirements if the school district makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the locally-imposed graduation requirements in time to graduate by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

- 3) Requires the exemption to continue to apply after the termination of the court's jurisdiction over the student while he or she is enrolled in school or if the student transfers to another school or school district.
- 4) Extends existing requirements related to determining if a student is reasonably able to complete the local graduation requirements within the student's fifth year of high school, notification of eligibility for the exemption, notification of how the exemption may affect admission to postsecondary education and the prohibition on transferring a student solely to be eligible for the exemption.
- 5) Requires the county office of education to issue a diploma of graduation to a student who completes the statewide coursework requirements for graduation while attending a juvenile court school, and prohibits the county office of education from requiring the student to complete coursework or other requirements that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements.
- 6) Requires the joint transition planning policy to describe how the county office of education and the county probation department will assist eligible youth in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and admission applications for postsecondary educational institutions.
- 7) Extends to former juvenile court school students existing provisions that prohibit school districts or county offices of education from requiring specified youth to retake a course if the student has satisfactorily completed, and enrollment in courses when partial credit is awarded.
- 8) Defines "former juvenile court school pupil" as a student who, upon completion of the student's second year of high school, transfers to a school district from a juvenile court school.
- 9) States legislative intent that students in juvenile court schools have a rigorous curriculum that includes a course of study preparing them for high school graduation and career entry and fulfilling the requirements for admission to the University of California and California State University.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, "Juvenile court school pupils often fall through the cracks when it comes to high school graduation. When a pupil's school district has implemented graduation requirements in addition to statewide requirements, the pupil often does not have time to complete those requirements when they have in fact completed statewide requirements, thus leaving them without a diploma."
- 2) **Parity.** This bill extends policies and procedures for graduation requirements and completed coursework to students who transfer from a juvenile court school that are currently provided to students who are in foster care or who are homeless.

- 3) **Transition planning policy.** Existing law requires a county office of education and county probation department to have a joint transition planning policy to improve communication regarding the educational needs of students, to coordinate immediate school placement and enrollment, and to ensure that probation officers have information to support the return of students who are being transferred from juvenile court schools to public schools. This bill requires the joint transition planning policy to describe how the county office of education and the county probation department will assist eligible youth in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and admission applications for postsecondary educational institutions. This provision was added to this bill after the bill reached the Senate. This is the first time a policy committee will consider provisions related to transition planning policy.

It appears that the purpose of transition planning is to ease the transfer of students back into K-12 public schools. Is it appropriate to expand the purpose and focus of joint transition planning policies to relate to the completion of the FAFSA and postsecondary education applications? Should the legislature make changes to transition planning policies prior to the release of recommendations as part of the required report (see #4)? Should county offices of education be required to provide assistance to students transferring out of a juvenile court school while no other schools are required to offer such assistance?

Staff recommends an amendment to authorize, but not require, the transition planning policy to include postsecondary transition, including a description of how students will be assisted in completing the FAFSA and applications for postsecondary educational institutions.

- 4) **Report on transition.** Existing law requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene a statewide group with stakeholders from the community, advocacy organizations, and education and probation department leaders to develop a model and study existing successful county programs and policies for the immediate transfer of educational records, uniform systems for calculating and awarding credits, transition planning, and the immediate enrollment of students who are being transferred from juvenile court schools. Existing law requires the statewide group to report its findings and provide recommendations for state action to the Legislature and appropriate policy committees by January 1, 2016. According to the California Department of Education, this report has not yet been submitted to the Legislature; submission is expected later this year.
- 5) **Fiscal impact.** According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee's analysis of the prior version of this bill, this bill would impose unknown, likely minor, Proposition 98 state reimbursable mandated costs for county offices of education to issue diplomas to students that complete statewide coursework requirements for graduation while attending juvenile court schools. There should be minor workload associated with determining if the student meets statewide graduation requirements.

SUPPORT

Anti-Recidivism Coalition
California School Boards Association
California State PTA
Chief Probation Officers of California
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Los Angeles LGBT Center
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
Small School Districts' Association
Youth Law Center

OPPOSITION

None received.

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