
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair

2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: AB 801
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Consultant: Kathleen Chavira
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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Postsecondary education: Success for Homeless Youth in Higher Education Act

SUMMARY

This bill requires the extension of priority enrollment, as specified, to homeless youth or former homeless youth at the California Community Colleges (CCC) and the California State University (CSU) and requests that the University of California (UC) make this same extension, requires designation of a Homeless and Foster Student Liaison at each Cal Grant participating institution, grants homeless youth enrolling in a public higher education institution residency status, as specified, requires the waiver of per unit fees for a homeless youth or former homeless youth at the community colleges and adds homeless youth to the categories of youth to be served under existing financial aid programs and services.

BACKGROUND

Existing federal law:

- 1) Defines the term "homeless children and youth" to mean individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, as specified, including, but not limited to, the following: 1) children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; 2) are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; 3) are living in emergency or transitional shelters; 4) are abandoned in hospitals; 5) are awaiting foster care placement; 6) have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; and, 7) are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings. (42 United States Code § 11301, et seq.)
- 2) Defines "homeless youth", under Section 725 of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; to mean a person who is 24 years of age or younger and who has been determined to be homeless at any time during the current calendar year; and, defines "former homeless youth" to mean a person who is 24 years of age or younger, and who, while not currently homeless, has been determined to be homeless, at any time in the immediately preceding six calendar years, by any of the following: a) a homeless services provider, as defined; b) the director of a federal TRIO program or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate

Programs program, or a designee of that director; and, c) a financial aid administrator for an institution of higher education.

Existing state law:

- 1) Requires, until January 1, 2017, the California State University (CSU) and each community college district and requests each campus of the University of California (UC) that administers a priority enrollment system, to grant priority registration for enrollment of current or former foster youth. (Education Code § 66025.9)
- 2) Establishes the Community College Student Financial Aid Outreach Program, administered by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to provide financial aid training to high school and community college counselors and advisors who work with students planning to attend or attending a California Community College (CCC). The training is required to address the specific needs of CCC students intending to transfer to a four-year institution, foster youth, and students with disabilities. (EC § 69514.5)
- 3) Establishes the Student Opportunity and Access Program, administered and supported by CSAC, to apportion funds, as specified for projects designed to increase the accessibility of postsecondary educational opportunities for elementary and secondary school pupils who are from low-income families, who would be the first in their families to attend college, and who are from schools or geographic regions with documented low-eligibility or college participation rates. (EC § 69561)
- 4) Requires a community college governing board to charge each student a \$46 per unit fee per semester. Existing law makes this fee requirement inapplicable to noncredit courses and specified student groups and authorizes the governing board to exempt certain student groups from this fee. Existing law specifically requires that these fees be waived for students who, at the time of enrollment meet specified requirements, including, that they are members of the military, veterans or their dependents, as specified, receive benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, the Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, or a general assistance program, demonstrate eligibility according to income standards established by regulations of the CCC Board of Governors, demonstrates financial need in accordance with the methodology set forth in federal law or regulation for determining the expected family contribution of students seeking financial aid, is a dependent or surviving spouse who has not remarried, of any member of the California National Guard who, in the line of duty and while in the active service of the state, was killed, died of a disability resulting from an event that occurred while in the active service of the state, or is permanently disabled as a result of an event that occurred while in the active service of the state and various others, as specified. (EC § 76300)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires the California State University (CSU) and each California Community College (CCC), and requests each UC campus that administers a priority enrollment system, to extend priority enrollment to current or former homeless youth.
- 2) Defines "homeless" and "homeless youth" as having the same meaning as defined in Section 725 of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (see background).
- 3) Requires a qualifying postsecondary educational institution, as defined for purposes of the Cal Grant program, to both:
 - a) Designate an existing staff member within the financial aid office, or another appropriate office or department of the institution to serve as the Homeless and Foster Student Liaison who is required to be responsible for understanding the federal Higher Education provisions on financial aid eligibility applicable to foster youth and homeless youth, as specified and to assist these students in applying for and receiving federal and state financial aid and services.
 - b) Inform current and prospective students of the institution about student financial aid and other assistance available to current and former homeless and/or foster youth, including their eligibility as independent students, per the federal Higher Education Act (HEA).
- 4) Request the UC Regents adopt policies, to the extent feasible, equivalent to the provisions outlined in (3).
- 5) Requires that a student that has been determined to be homeless, as defined, at any time during the two years immediately preceding residency classification be entitled to resident classification until he/she has resided in the state the minimum time necessary to establish residency if :
 - a) The student currently resides in California.
 - b) The student is 19 years of age or under at the time of enrollment in a public higher education institution.
- 6) Expands the training requirements for high school and community college counselors and advisors under the Community College Student Financial Aid Outreach Program to include training on the specific needs of current and former homeless youth, as defined.
- 7) Adds homeless youth and former homeless youth, as defined, to the student groups that may be served under Student Opportunity and Access Program projects administered and supported by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC).

- 8) Expands the list of students whose fees are required to be waived by a community college governing board to include any student who is a current or former homeless youth, as defined, at the time of enrollment.
- 9) Makes other clarifying, technical, and conforming changes.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** This bill would allow homeless youth to receive some of the same services and exemptions that are available to foster youth. While many services exist for foster youth and former foster youth, homeless youth are often not documented in the child welfare system or legally identified as dependents, so most are either unable to utilize these benefits or unaware of programs for which they may qualify. According to the author, in the 2012-13 school year there were 18,000 homeless pupils in grade 12 alone; yet only 10,208 California college students in total indicated a status of being homeless and unaccompanied.
- 2) **Homeless youth.** According to a September 2014 publication by the California Homeless Youth Project, *California's Homeless Students, a Growing Population*, California has the highest rate of homeless youth in the nation and twice the rate of homeless students as the national average (4 percent in California versus 2 percent nationally). In its *2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reports an estimated 46,924 homeless youths nationally on a single night in January, with 80 percent of these individuals between the ages of 18-24.
- 3) **Other potential services for homeless youth?** SB 1023 (Liu, Chapter 771, Statutes of 2014) authorized the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellors Office (CCCCO) to enter into agreements with up to 10 CCC districts to establish the Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support program in order to provide additional funds for services in support of postsecondary education for foster youth. The 2015-16 Budget Act provides up to \$15 million for this purpose. Should this program be expanded to include homeless youth and former homeless youth?

SUPPORT

Aspiranet
Bill Wilson Center
California Coalition for Youth
California Federation of Teachers
Campaign for College Opportunity
Children's Hospital of Los Angeles
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Echoes of Hope
Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership
Junior League of Orange County
University of California

OPPOSITION

None received.

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