STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0026
(916) 319-2026
FAX (916) 319-2126

DISTRICT OFFICE
20111 STEVENS CREEK BLVD., SUITE 220
CUPERTINO, CA 95014
(408) 446-2810
FAX (408) 446-2815

Assemblymember.Ahrens@assembly.ca.gov
https://a26.asmdc.org/

Assembly
California Legislature

PATRICK J. AHRENS
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, TWENTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
BUDGET
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS
HEALTH
RULES
TRANSPORTATION

CO-CHAIR: CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION CAUCUS

Assembly Bill 2768: Student Financial Aid: Deferment of Fees and Costs: Foster Youth

SUMMARY

AB 2768 requires institutions of higher education to waive or defer all enrollment-related costs for eligible current or former foster youth until federal student aid is disbursed. This deferment would apply only to the student's first term with the institution.

BACKGROUND

California provides several financial aid supports for current and former foster youth, including the Chafee Grant and systemwide tuition waivers. However, these supports are typically disbursed **after the academic term begins**. As a result, students are often required to pay enrollment deposits, on-campus housing fees, and other upfront costs before receiving any aid. Because foster youth disproportionately lack family financial support or access to credit, these early expenses can create delays in enrollment or prevent them from securing housing, course materials, or required programs. The timing mismatch is further highlighted when a student is required to take summer courses for their desired course of study.

PROBLEM

Foster youth face unique and significant barriers to accessing and completing higher education, resulting in lower persistence and degree-completion rates than their peers. While California waives mandatory systemwide tuition fees for foster youth, many critical campus-based expenses, such as housing deposits, textbooks, and required summer programs remain uncovered. These additional costs often delay enrollment or force students to alter their academic plans.

Research underscores the challenges foster youth encounter: **61 percent** of undergraduate **foster youth** experience food insecurity, compared to **44 percent** of **non-foster youth**, and **13 percent** report **homelessness** during enrollment, versus **5 percent** of their **non-foster peers**. On a local level, foster youth frequently struggle to pay housing deposits before financial aid is disbursed or must change their intended major due to the unaffordability of mandatory summer programs. Despite overcoming significant obstacles to reach college, they continue to face financial barriers that threaten their academic success.

To address these challenges, this policy seeks to remove unnecessary financial hurdles by deferring enrollment-related costs and providing early access to essential materials. By closing these gaps, the policy supports foster youth in enrolling, persisting, and succeeding in higher education, promoting a more equitable environment for one of California's most vulnerable student populations.

SOLUTION

AB 2768 requires California State University, community colleges, and private or independent colleges receiving state financial aid to defer unpaid enrollment fees and related costs for first-time foster youth and former foster youth until their financial aid is disbursed. Deferred costs include not only tuition and fees but also essential expenses such as housing deposits, textbooks, and required summer programs. This deferment would apply only to the student's first term with the institution.

By addressing these upfront costs, the bill aims to remove common financial barriers that can delay enrollment or disrupt students' academic plans. This ensures foster youth have a fair opportunity to enroll and succeed in higher education.

SUPPORT

Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools (Sponsor)

Staff Contact: Max Martinez, max.martinez@asm.ca.gov , (916) 319-2026