

## **SB 12 (Beall) – FACT SHEET**

### **Foster Youth in Higher Education**

#### **BACKGROUND**

California's foster care system has made important strides in the last several years for older youth in foster care, like providing more access to housing and other support services. One area where the state continues to struggle is post-secondary achievement among foster youth. By age 26, just 4 percent of former foster youth complete a college degree as compared to 36 percent of the same-age population of young adults.

#### **PROBLEM**

Research has identified several explanations for the low rate of post-secondary achievement, including high rates of disability, negative effects of foster care placement, etc. While these are important, an additional key factor is that foster youth disproportionately do not receive the financial aid they are entitled to due to a cumbersome verification process. A 2015 study of foster youth attending community college found that just 50 percent received the federal Pell Grant, even though almost all foster youth students qualify. Evidence shows that financial aid support is a strong predictor of degree attainment among vulnerable students, especially the foster youth population.

Another barrier that foster youth students face is completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from the start. The state has failed to ensure that foster youth make an informed and supported transition from K-12 to post-secondary education and completing the FAFSA form is the first step to attaining financial support for college fees. There is also a lack of on-campus services for foster youth that could provide that essential support throughout their college experience.

#### **THIS BILL**

Given the statistics on the impact of financial aid and the need to provide other support services for foster youth, the focus of this bill is to improve post-secondary achievement among foster youth by increasing the rate of financial aid awards, provide assistance to complete necessary post-secondary documents, and increase access to on-campus based services.

This bill has three key provisions:

- First, every county child welfare agency would be required to identify a person to assist foster youth with applications for postsecondary education and financial aid.
- Second, streamline the financial aid verification process for foster youth who apply through FAFSA.
- Third, expand an existing on-campus based support program from the current level of 10 community college districts to 20 districts, thereby enabling more foster youth to receive the support they need to succeed.

#### **SPONSORS**

John Burton Advocates for Youth

#### **SUPPORT**

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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