

Date of Hearing: August 3, 2020

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Patrick O'Donnell, Chair

SB 860 (Beall) – As Amended May 13, 2020

**SENATE VOTE:** 39-0

**SUBJECT:** Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program: postsecondary education financial aid applications

**SUMMARY:** This bill requires a Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) to ensure, to the extent possible, that youth in foster care complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA), and requires a FYSCP to report data on how many students in foster care complete the FAFSA or CADAA. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires a FYSCP plan to describe how the program will coordinate efforts to ensure, to the extent possible, completion of the FAFSA or the CADAA for foster youth students in grade 12.
- 2) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to include the number and percentage of students in foster care who successfully complete the FAFSA or CADAA while in grade 12 in the SPI's biennial report to the Legislature and Governor on the FYSCPs.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Allows a county office of education (COE), or a consortium of COEs, to apply to the SPI for grant funding to operate an education-based FYSCP to provide educational support for pupils in foster care. Requires, as a condition of receiving funds, each FYSCP operated by a COE or consortium of COEs to develop and implement a FYSCP plan to establish guiding principles and protocols to provide supports for students in foster care. (EC 42921)
- 2) Requires each FYSCP plan to include a description of how the program will facilitate coordination with local postsecondary educational institutions, including, but not limited to, the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC), to ensure foster youth pupils meet admission requirements and access programs that support their matriculation needs. (EC 429421)
- 3) Requires the SPI to submit a biennial report on FYSCPs to the Legislature and the Governor. The report must include aggregate educational outcome data for each county with at least 15 students in foster care, with information on each of the following indicators and a discussion of the meaning and implications of these indicators:
  - a) The number of students in foster care who attended school in the county.

- b) The academic achievement of the students in foster care who attended school in the county, as determined by quantitative and qualitative data currently collected by program participants.
  - c) The number of students in foster care who were suspended or expelled.
  - d) The number of students in foster care who were placed in a juvenile hall, camp, ranch, or other county-operated juvenile detention facility because of an incident of juvenile delinquency.
  - e) The truancy rates, attendance rates, and dropout rates for students in foster care.
  - f) The number of students in foster care participating in foster youth services coordinating programs pursuant to this chapter who successfully transition to postsecondary education. (EC 42923)
- 4) Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to collaborate with the CCC and CSU Chancellors to identify indicators that can be used to track access to postsecondary education for students in foster care participating in a FYSCP. (EC 42923)
- 5) Requires, commencing with the 2020-21 school year, the governing board of a school district and the governing body of a charter school to ensure that each of its students receives information on how to properly complete and submit the FAFSA or CADAA at least once before the student enters grade 12. Requires that this information include the following:
- a) The types of documentation and personal information that each application requires.
  - b) An explanation of the definitions used for each application.
  - c) Eligibility requirements for student financial aid that may be applied for using the FAFSA or CADAA.
  - d) Application timelines and submission deadlines.
  - e) The importance of submitting the application early, especially when student financial aid is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. (EC 51225.8)
- 6) Requires the completion and submission of the FAFSA as a condition for waiving systemwide fees or tuition at the University of California, the CSU, and the CCC. (EC 6900, 66025.3)
- 7) Requires the case plan for a foster youth who is 16 years of age or older to identify the person or persons, who may include the child's high school counselor, Court Appointed

Special Advocate, guardian, or other adult, who is responsible for assisting the foster youth with applications for postsecondary education and related financial aid. (EC 79221)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

**COMMENTS:**

***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “Financial aid is critical for success in higher education, but currently just 40 percent of foster youth received the Pell Grant and only 11 percent received the Cal Grant, despite virtually all meeting income eligibility requirements. One of the primary barriers that foster youth students face is that many do not complete the FAFSA. The low rate of financial aid attainment speaks to the fact that foster youth are not receiving the support they need to complete the required steps necessary to receive most forms of financial aid. The FYS Coordinating Programs, housed within each county’s office of education, are the obvious entity to facilitate this coordination. These programs interface with school districts, child welfare and probation agencies, and community partners to coordinate educational support services for foster youth in their county. Further, they are tasked with coordinating support for college matriculation for foster youth. This bill will clarify that FAFSA completion is a specified element of this responsibility.”

***FAFSA and CADAA are used to determine student financial aid eligibility.*** Students who are U.S. citizens or national or permanent residents of the U.S. can complete the FAFSA to determine their eligibility for federal and state financial aid. The CADAA is used to determine eligibility for state financial aid for California students who are not U.S. citizens or national or permanent residents. The California Dream Act and corresponding financial aid application (the CADAA) are unrelated to the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Completion of either the FAFSA or the CADAA is required to establish financial eligibility for many grants and scholarships, including the Cal Grant, Middle Class Scholarship, Chafee Grant for foster youth, UC Grants, CSU Grants, some university scholarships, and some private scholarships administered by campuses. Current and prospective college students who do not complete the FAFSA or CADAA lose the opportunity to apply for substantial amounts of financial aid. The maximum award amount and income eligibility requirements for several key state and federal grants, as reported on the California Student Aid Commission and the Federal Student Aid websites, are summarized in Table 1.

Grant	Max Award Amount (2020-21)	Income Eligibility (independent students)	FAFSA or CADAA Requirement?
Pell Grant	\$6,345	Approximately \$26,000 (for maximum award)	FAFSA only
Cal Grant A	\$12,570 (UC) \$5,742 (CSU)	\$39,000	FAFSA or CADAA
Cal Grant B	\$1,672 (UC/CSU 1 <sup>st</sup> year) \$14,242 (UC other years)	\$39,000	FAFSA or CADAA

	\$7,414 (CSU other years)		
Cal Grant C	\$3,009 (vocational school)	\$39,000	FAFSA or CADAA
Middle Class Scholarship	\$12,570 (UC) \$5,742 (CSU)	\$184,000 (family income)	FAFSA or CADAA
Chafee Grant	\$5,000	—	FAFSA or CADAA

***FAFSA completion is correlated with college enrollment and persistence.*** For many students, especially those who are low-income, the financial burden of college attendance is a significant barrier to matriculation. Grants such as the Cal Grant A and the Middle Class Scholarship cover up to 40% of the tuition and fees for students enrolled at CSU and the UC, and financial aid can help students cover additional costs and living expenses.

Survey data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reveals a correlation between FAFSA completion and college attendance. Survey responses were collected from more than 23,000 students who started 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2009 with periodic follow-up surveys through 2016. This study showed that FAFSA completion was correlated with increased college enrollment during the Fall semester following high school graduation, especially for low-income students. The data was broken down into five groups (quintiles) based on socioeconomic status (SES). The college-going rate for students whose SES was within the lowest quintile was 85% for those who completed the FAFSA compared to only 37.4% for those who did not—an increase in enrollment rates of 127%. On average across all students regardless of SES, the rate of immediate college enrollment was 92% for students who completed the FAFSA and only 51% for students who did not complete the FAFSA.

It is important to note that the correlations reported in this study do not assert causation. Only students who plan to attend college have a reason to complete the FAFSA, which likely contributes to the reported correlation between FAFSA completion and college enrollment.

The NCES study also found a correlation between FAFSA completion and full-time vs. part-time enrollment in college. For low-income students who enrolled in college immediately after high school, the rates of full-time enrollment were 86.2% for those who completed the FAFSA and 42.2% for those who did not. For higher income students (those in the highest quintile of SES data) full-time enrollment rates were 91.6% with FAFSA and 77% without FAFSA. FAFSA completion narrowed the full-time postsecondary enrollment gap based on socioeconomic status by nearly 25%.

A 2009 report published by the Center for American Progress summarized findings from a study on FAFSA completion and college-going rates for students enrolled in the Chicago Public School System. This study focused on the effect of FAFSA completion on college enrollment among students who had been accepted to a four-year college. This narrow focus removes some (but not all) of the confounding factors present in the NCES study, which included all students regardless of their intent to attend college. The study found that among students who had been accepted to a four-year college, 84% of students who completed the FAFSA by the end of the school year attended a four-year college in the fall, compared to only 55% of students who did not complete the FAFSA.

Data suggests that financial aid also supports the academic success of low-income students after college enrollment. A 2017 report by the Association of Community College Trustees in collaboration with the Institute for College Access and Success tracked financial aid and student success data from 184,705 first-time students from the 2009-10 school year through 2014-15. They found that for students with an “expected family contribution” of zero (the amount the federal government estimates the student and their family can contribute to college costs), 49% of those who received at least \$7,501 in financial aid successfully graduated or transferred from their community college compared to only 17% of those who received between \$1,001 and \$2,500. A study from the California Coalition for Youth (CalYOUTH) indicates that students in foster care who receive the Chafee grant exhibit increased persistence (number of completed semesters) in college.

A similar study using survey data from the NCES Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study found that community college students who completed the FAFSA were more likely to persist through their first full year of college. The study controlled for other relevant factors (including delayed vs. immediate college enrollment, high school and first-year GPA, and access to academic counseling) and found that FAFSA filing status had the strongest association with whether or not students persisted to their second semester in community college.

***Foster youth have lower FAFSA completion and college attendance rates than their peers.***

According to KidsData.org, there were nearly 60,000 youths (age 0-20) in foster care in California in 2018. Although 85% of foster youth report that they aspire to go to college, fewer than 8% earn a bachelor’s degree by age 26, compared with 46% of the general population, according to the John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY).

In 2019, just under 50% of first-year foster youth students received a Pell Grant, and only 14% received a Cal Grant, although nearly 80% of foster youth meet the income criteria for these grants. This is attributed, at least in part, to low FAFSA completion rates – in 2017 the FAFSA completion rate among students in foster care was 45%, compared to 57.6% for the general student population in California.

***Targeted support increases FAFSA completion rates.*** A study conducted during 2007-2009 by researchers in partnership with H&R block demonstrated that providing technical assistance significantly increased FAFSA completion. The study included over 26,000 participating families with an income of less than \$45,000 and at least one child graduating high school who filed their taxes at an H&R block location. Because much of the information required in the FAFSA is also required on tax forms, this partnership was designed to streamline the FAFSA-filing experience. When participating families filed their taxes at an H&R block location, they were provided with (1) information regarding their child’s eligibility for financial aid and the opportunity to fill out the FAFSA on-site with expert technical assistance, (2) information regarding their child’s eligibility for financial aid only, or (3) no information or technical assistance. Students just graduating from high school whose parents received the assistance experienced an 8% increase in college enrollment the following year. In contrast, students who received aid information but no assistance with the FAFSA did not experience improved outcomes. This study emphasizes that technical challenges, and not just lack of awareness, are a barrier to FAFSA completion.

More recently, efforts have been introduced to improve the disproportionately low rates of FAFSA completion among foster youth by providing targeted assistance. In 2017, JBAY launched the FAFSA Challenge in partnership with the CDE and the CCC Chancellor's Office for this purpose. At the local level, the FAFSA Challenge is administered through FYSCPs at COEs, with JBAY providing promotional materials, training, technical assistance, and incentives for programs to reach out to foster youth and help them complete the application. Counties with the highest rates of foster youth completing the FAFSA receive awards of up to \$1,000.

According to JBAY, the FAFSA completion rate among foster youth has increased from 45% in 2017 to 64.5% for 2019-20, surpassing the completion rate for non-foster youth. In Los Angeles County, which has the largest number of students in foster care in the state, the rate of FAFSA completion increased from 33% in 2017-18 to 68% in 2019-20. This suggests that targeted outreach and technical assistance administered through FYSCPs can increase the FAFSA completion rate specifically among students in foster care. This bill would codify elements of the FAFSA Challenge by specifying that FYSCPs would be responsible for ensuring, to the extent possible, that students in foster care successfully complete the FAFSA.

The impact of this recent increase in FAFSA completion on college enrollment of students in foster care is not yet available, as 2018-19 and 2019-20 data on college-going rates in California are not yet available.

***Role of FYSCPs in supporting foster youth transitioning to postsecondary education.*** In 2015, the Legislature established FYSCPs to support interagency collaboration and capacity building, both at the system and student level to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. COEs can apply for a state grant (2020-2021 base funding level is \$75,000) to operate a FYSCP program. FYSCPs have the authority to ensure health and education records are obtained to establish appropriate placement and coordinate instruction, counseling, tutoring mentoring, vocational training, emancipation services, training for independent living, and other services.

FYSCPs that receive grant funding are required to complete an annual program plan and year-end program evaluation. The program plan is required to include how the program will facilitate coordination with local postsecondary educational institutions, including CCC, CSU, and UC, to ensure foster youth pupils meet admission requirements and access programs that support matriculation needs. While FYSCPs are not legally required to assist students in foster care apply for financial aid, 52 of California's 58 counties provided targeted FAFSA/CADAA support while participating in the FAFSA Challenge in 2019-20.

This bill would explicitly require a FYSCP to describe in the FYSCP plan how the program would coordinate efforts to ensure, to the extent possible, completion of the FAFSA or the CADAA for foster youth students in twelfth grade.

FYSCP programs are required to submit data to the SPI to be included in the SPI's biennial report on FYSCPs to the Legislature and Governor. This report must include data on the number of students in foster care in the county, their academic achievement, rates of suspension, expulsion, truancy, attendance, and drop-out, and the number of foster students who were placed in a county-operated juvenile detention facility. The SPI's report is also required to include the number of students in foster care participating in FYSCPs who successfully transition to postsecondary education.

This bill would require the number and percentage of students in foster care who successfully complete the FAFSA or CADAA in 12<sup>th</sup> grade to be included in the SPI's biennial report.

***Schools will be required to provide FAFSA and CADAA support to all students commencing in 2020-21.*** AB 2015 (Reyes, Chapter 544, Statutes of 2018) requires school districts and charter schools, commencing in 2020-21, to ensure that students receive information on how to properly complete and submit the FAFSA or CADAA at least once before each student enters the 12th grade. The method for providing this information is left to the discretion of the school district or charter school, but may include in-class instruction, an existing program, family information sessions, or group or individual sessions with school counselors.

Each school district and charter school is required to provide information on the types of documentation and personal information needed for each application along with an explanation of the terms and definitions used in the forms. They must also include information on the eligibility requirements, timelines, and deadlines for the FAFSA and CADAA and an explanation of the importance of submitting applications early, especially when financial aid is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Districts and charters must provide students with a paper copy of the FAFSA or CADAA upon request.

Because this law does not go into effect until the 2020-21 school year, its impact on FAFSA completion (in general and among foster youth) is unknown. However, the intent of AB 2015 is to equip all students, including students in foster care, with appropriate information and tools to apply for financial aid and to complete the FAFSA or CADAA.

***Arguments in support.*** According to the California Student Aid Commission, “research indicates that current and former foster youth often struggle with college costs and completion. Support in filling out financial aid applications can help mitigate these challenges and make college affordability a reality for these students.”

***Related legislation.*** AB 1617 (Reyes, 2019) would have required students to complete a FAFSA, or opt-out from doing so, as a condition of graduation from high school. AB 1617 was held in the Assembly Education Committee.

SB 958 (Leyva, 2020) would have expanded eligibility for priority enrollment and for a program of support for current and former foster youth at California Community Colleges, clarifies that the program may provide direct financial assistance to students prior to the beginning of an academic term, and requires regulations to allow the waiving of income criteria for students who were employed prior to enrollment. This bill was held in the Senate Committee on Human Services.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Advanced Consulting, LLC  
Alameda County Casa  
Alliance for Children's Rights  
Aspiranet  
Bakersfield College

Barstow Community College  
Beyond Emancipation  
Bill Wilson Center  
Butte College  
Cabrillo College Guardian Scholars  
California Alliance of Child and Family Services  
California Department of Education  
California Faculty Association  
California Federation of Teachers  
California School Boards Association  
California Student Aid Commission  
California Teachers Association  
California Youth Connection  
California Youth Connection (CYC)  
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County  
Cerritos College  
Chabot College  
Children's Law Center of California  
Citrus College  
County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)  
Crafton Hills College  
Creative Alternatives  
CSU Monterey Bay College Support Programs  
Diablo Valley College  
East Bay Children's Law Offices  
Excite Credit Union  
First Place for Youth  
First STAR  
Foster & Kinship Care Education, Woodland Community College  
Foster Care Counts  
Fullerton College  
Imperial Valley College Eops  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Long Beach City College Guardian Scholars  
Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office  
Los Angeles Harbor College Eops  
Merced College  
Merritt College  
Mission College  
Modesto Junior College Student Success  
Moreno Valley College  
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter  
National Center for Youth Law  
Norco College  
Norco College - Calworks, Drc, Eops/care, Foster Youth/nextup  
One Day, INC.  
Oxnard College  
Pasadena City College Nextup  
Porterville College



Reedley College  
Rio Hondo College  
Riverside City College  
Riverside Community College District  
San Bernardino Valley College Guardian Scholars  
Santa Monica College Guardian Scholars  
Santa Rosa Junior College Student Financial Services  
Shasta College  
Silicon Valley Leadership Group  
Skyline College  
STAR Vista  
Swipe Out Hunger  
The Education Trust - West  
Tipping Point Community  
UC Irvine - Foster Youth Resilience in Education (FYRE)  
Unite-la, INC.  
Unity Care  
Victor Valley College Nextup  
Voices Youth Centers  
Walden Family Services  
Wesley House  
Youth Law Center

**Opposition**

None on file

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