

By Senator Calatayud

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to postsecondary students who are
3 homeless or at risk of homelessness; amending s.
4 409.1452, F.S.; revising the supports and services
5 certain liaisons must provide to certain students;
6 requiring the Department of Education and the Board of
7 Governors of the State University System to develop
8 best practices and training materials for certain
9 employees related to identifying students experiencing
10 or at risk of experiencing homelessness; requiring
11 school district programs, Florida College System
12 institutions, and state universities to annually
13 provide employees and students with such best
14 practices and materials related to students
15 experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness;
16 requiring Florida College System institutions and
17 state universities to develop plans for prioritizing
18 students experiencing or at risk of experiencing
19 homelessness in residence halls and dormitory
20 residences; requiring certain Florida College System
21 institutions and state universities to prioritize
22 students experiencing or at risk of experiencing
23 homelessness for certain housing and work
24 opportunities; requiring the Chancellors of the
25 Division of Career Adult Education, the Florida
26 College System, and the State University System to
27 annually report certain information to the department;
28 amending s. 420.622, F.S.; revising requirements for
29 the State Office on Homelessness to include

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30 collaborating with specified entities for a specified
31 purpose; creating s. 1009.702, F.S.; establishing the
32 Fostering Independence Grant Program within the
33 Department of Education to be administered by Florida
34 College System institutions and state universities;
35 providing the purpose of the program; providing
36 student eligibility requirements; providing for the
37 award and amount of grants through the program,
38 subject to legislative appropriation; providing
39 reporting requirements for Florida College System
40 institutions and state universities; requiring the
41 department to contract with a certain entity to
42 provide technical assistance to Florida College System
43 institutions and state universities; requiring the
44 State Board of Education and Board of Governors to
45 adopt rules and regulations, respectively; providing
46 an effective date.

47
48 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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50 Section 1. Section 409.1452, Florida Statutes, is amended
51 to read:

52 409.1452 Collaboration with State University System,
53 Florida College System, and Department of Education to assist
54 children and young adults who have been or are in foster care or
55 are experiencing homelessness; documentation regarding
56 eligibility for tuition and fee exemptions.—The department shall
57 collaborate with the State University System, the Florida
58 College System, and the Department of Education to address the

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59 need for a comprehensive support structure in the academic arena
60 to assist children and young adults who have been or remain in
61 the foster care system in making the transition from a
62 structured care system into an independent living setting.

63 (1) (a) Each school district program, Florida College System
64 institution, or state university at which a student is exempt
65 from the payment of tuition and fees under s. 1009.25 must have,
66 at a minimum, a knowledgeable, accessible, and responsive
67 employee who acts as a liaison and provides assistance to those
68 students who are exempt from the payment of tuition and fees to
69 assist in resolving any problems related to such exemption. The
70 liaisons ~~shall provide such students with on-campus support and~~
71 must be employees of the program, institution, or university.

72 1. The name and contact information of the liaison must be:

73 ~~a.1.~~ Provided to each student who is exempt from the
74 payment of tuition and fees and who is attending that program,
75 institution, or university.

76 ~~b.2.~~ Published on the website of the program, institution,
77 or university.

78 ~~c.3.~~ Provided to the department and each community-based
79 care lead agency.

80 2. The liaison shall provide such students with on-campus
81 support, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

82 a. Assistance with identifying and applying for any tuition
83 waivers or exemptions for which the student is eligible.

84 b. Assistance with identifying and applying for other
85 available financial aid options for which the student is
86 eligible.

87 c. Academic advising tailored to the individual needs of

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88 the student, considering the populations to which he or she
89 belongs.

90 d. Referrals, as appropriate, to support services offered
91 by the program, Florida College System institution, state
92 university, or community-based partners.

93 (b) Each school district program, Florida College System
94 institution, and state university must maintain the original
95 documentation submitted by the student regarding his or her
96 eligibility for the tuition and fee exemption under s. 1009.25
97 and may not make additional requests for such documentation.

98 (2) A school district program, Florida College System
99 institution, or state university may also provide campus
100 coaching services and other support to a student who is exempt
101 from the payment of tuition and fees under s. 1009.25 to promote
102 his or her successful completion of postsecondary education and
103 transition to independent living.

104 (3) (a) The Department of Education and the Board of
105 Governors of the State University System shall, in consultation
106 with the State Office on Homelessness within the Department of
107 Children and Families, develop best practices and training
108 materials for all employees of each school district program,
109 Florida College System institution, and state university for the
110 purpose of:

111 1. Identifying students experiencing, or at risk of
112 experiencing, homelessness.

113 2. Referring such students to the program's, institution's,
114 or university's liaison.

115 3. Raising awareness among all students of available
116 services and supports for such population of students.

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117 (b) Each school district program, Florida College System
118 institution, and state university must:

119 1. Annually provide electronically the best practices and
120 training materials to all employees.

121 2. Annually provide electronically awareness materials to
122 students.

123 3. Post awareness materials in public places on its
124 campuses, including student unions and libraries.

125 (4) Each Florida College System institution and state
126 university shall, in consultation with the State Office on
127 Homelessness within the Department of Children and Families,
128 develop plans for prioritizing the placement of students
129 experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing
130 homelessness, including, but not limited to, students eligible
131 for the tuition and fee exemption under s. 1009.25(1)(e), in
132 residence halls and dormitory residences owned by the
133 institution or university.

134 (5) If a Florida College System institution or state
135 university implements a priority system for the assignment of
136 students to or the award of any of the following, the
137 institution or university must provide students eligible for the
138 tuition and fee exemption under s. 1009.25(1)(e) with first
139 priority given to:

140 (a) Institution-operated or university-operated housing.

141 (b) Year-round housing.

142 (c) Work-study opportunities.

143 (6) Each Florida College System institution and state
144 university is encouraged to develop payment plans for housing
145 and other expenses with payments that coincide with the

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146 disbursement of financial aid, including grants, loans, and
147 work-study income for students experiencing homelessness or at
148 risk of experiencing homelessness, including, but not limited
149 to, students eligible for the tuition and fee exemption under s.
150 1009.25(1)(e).

151 (7)~~(3)~~ The Chancellors of the Division of Career and Adult
152 Education, the Florida College System, and the State University
153 System shall report annually to the department specific data,
154 subject to privacy laws, about the students who are exempt from
155 the payment of tuition and fees under s. 1009.25(1)(e) served by
156 the campus liaisons, including academic progress, retention
157 rates for students enrolled in the program, financial aid
158 requested and received, and information required by the National
159 Youth in Transition Database. The report must also include the
160 retention and graduation rates of recipients of grants from the
161 Fostering Independence Grant Program under s. 1009.702 as a
162 distinct group within the report.

163 Section 2. Paragraphs (p) and (q) are added to subsection
164 (3) of section 420.622, Florida Statutes, to read:

165 420.622 State Office on Homelessness; Council on
166 Homelessness.—

167 (3) The State Office on Homelessness, pursuant to the
168 policies set by the council and subject to the availability of
169 funding, shall:

170 (p) Provide consultation to the Department of Education and
171 the Board of Governors of the State University System in
172 developing best practices and training materials pursuant to s.
173 409.1452.

174 (q) Provide consultation to Florida College System

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175 institutions and state universities in the development and
176 implementation of plans for prioritizing the placement of
177 students experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness,
178 including, but not limited to, students who are eligible for the
179 tuition and fee exemption under s. 1009.25(1)(e), in residence
180 halls and dormitory residences owned or operated by the
181 institution or university.

182 Section 3. Section 1009.702, Florida Statutes, is created
183 to read:

184 1009.702 Fostering Independence Grant Program.—

185 (1) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE.—The Fostering Independence
186 Grant Program is established within the Department of Education
187 to ensure that the costs associated with attending a Florida
188 College System institution or state university are not a barrier
189 to education for eligible former foster youth and students
190 experiencing homelessness. The program shall be administered by
191 participating Florida College System institutions and state
192 universities pursuant to State Board of Education rules and
193 Board of Governors regulations.

194 (2) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible for a grant, a student
195 must:

196 (a) Be eligible for the tuition and fee exemption under s.
197 1009.25(1)(c)1.-4 or (e).

198 (b) Be a resident for tuition purposes pursuant to s.
199 1009.21.

200 (c) Have earned a standard high school diploma under s.
201 1002.3105(5), s. 1003.4281, or s. 1003.4282 or its equivalent
202 under s. 1003.435.

203 (d) Be enrolled in at least 9 credit hours per semester, or

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204 the equivalent, in a degree program, a certificate program, or
205 an applied technology program at a Florida College System
206 institution or state university.

207 (e) Have submitted a Free Application for Federal Student
208 Aid which is complete and accurate before the disbursement of
209 grant funds and met the eligibility requirements of s. 1009.50
210 for demonstrated financial need for the Florida Public Student
211 Assistance Grant Program.

212 (3) GRANT AWARD.—Subject to legislative appropriation, the
213 award amount to each student shall be based on the student's
214 unmet need after any federal, state, and institutional financial
215 aid has been applied, including, but not limited to, a Pell
216 Grant or Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program award. A
217 student is eligible to receive a maximum award equal to the
218 amount needed to cover 100 percent of the estimated annual cost
219 of attendance for the student to attend the Florida College
220 System institution or state university after all federal, state,
221 and institutional financial aid has been applied.

222 (4) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Each Florida College System
223 institution and state university must annually report the
224 retention and graduation rates of recipients of a grant under
225 this section pursuant to s. 409.1452.

226 (5) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The department shall contract
227 with a not-for-profit entity with experience supporting the
228 educational success of youth experiencing homelessness and youth
229 who are aging out of foster care to provide technical assistance
230 to Florida College System institutions and state universities,
231 state agencies, service providers, homeless service providers,
232 and residential programs whose students may be eligible to

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233 participate in the grant program.

234 (6) The State Board of Education and the Board of Governors
235 shall adopt rules and regulations, respectively, to administer
236 this section.

237 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.