

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to young adults who are homeless or  
3           were in the child welfare system; amending s.  
4           409.1452, F.S.; requiring each Florida College System  
5           institution and state university, in consultation with  
6           the State Office on Homelessness, to develop a plan to  
7           prioritize the placement of certain students in  
8           residence halls or dormitory residences; providing  
9           responsibilities for the Office of Continuing Care,  
10          Florida College System institutions, and state  
11          universities; requiring that certain institutions and  
12          universities give priority to certain students for  
13          housing and work-study programs; creating s.  
14          409.14521, F.S.; defining the term "young adult";  
15          requiring certain entities to develop programs and  
16          supports to help young adults access certain federal  
17          programs and vouchers; providing requirements for such  
18          programs and supports; requiring specified entities to  
19          maintain certain records and provide certain  
20          assurances to landlords; providing applicability;  
21          creating s. 1009.899, F.S.; creating the Fostering  
22          Independence Grant Program within the Department of  
23          Education for a specified purpose; providing  
24          eligibility requirements; providing for the  
25          distribution of grant funds based on whether the

26 student receives other types of financial aid;  
 27 requiring participating Florida College System  
 28 institutions and state universities to report certain  
 29 information to the Department of Education annually;  
 30 requiring the Office of Program Policy Analysis and  
 31 Government Accountability, in consultation with other  
 32 entities, to conduct a specified study and report its  
 33 findings to the Governor and Legislature by a date  
 34 certain; providing requirements for such study;  
 35 effective date.

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 37 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 39 **Section 1. Subsection (3) of section 409.1452, Florida**  
 40 **Statutes, is renumbered as subsection (5), and a new subsection**  
 41 **(3) and subsection (4) are added to that section, to read:**

42 409.1452 Collaboration with State University System,  
 43 Florida College System, and Department of Education to assist  
 44 children and young adults who have been or are in foster care or  
 45 are experiencing homelessness; documentation regarding  
 46 eligibility for tuition and fee exemptions; housing assistance.—  
 47 The department shall collaborate with the State University  
 48 System, the Florida College System, and the Department of  
 49 Education to address the need for a comprehensive support  
 50 structure in the academic arena to assist children and young

51 adults who have been or remain in the foster care system in  
52 making the transition from a structured care system into an  
53 independent living setting.

54 (3) Each Florida College System institution and state  
55 university shall, in consultation with the State Office on  
56 Homelessness, develop a plan to prioritize the placement of  
57 students who are 28 years of age or younger and who:

58 (a) Are or were formerly in foster care in the United  
59 States;

60 (b) Are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of  
61 experiencing homelessness; or

62 (c) Are eligible for the tuition and fee exemption under  
63 s. 1009.25(1)(c)1.-4. or (1)(e),

64  
65 in residence halls or dormitory residences owned or operated by  
66 the institution or university at which the student attends. The  
67 Office of Continuing Care established under s. 414.56 is  
68 responsible for determining if a student is or was formerly in  
69 foster care in the United States. Each Florida College System  
70 institution and state university is responsible for determining  
71 whether a student meets the definition of a homeless child or  
72 youth by using the process for determining whether a student is  
73 eligible for a tuition or fee exemption under s.

74 1009.25(1)(c)1.-4. or (1)(e).

75 (4) If a Florida College System institution or state

76 university implements a priority system for the assignment of  
 77 students to any of the following, the institution or university  
 78 must give first priority to students who are eligible for the  
 79 tuition and fee exemption under s. 1009.25(1)(c)1.-4. or (1)(e):

80 (a) Housing owned or operated by the institution or  
 81 university.

82 (b) Year-round housing.

83 (c) Work-study programs.

84 **Section 2. Section 409.14521, Florida Statutes, is created**  
 85 **to read:**

86 409.14521 Housing assistance for young adults.-

87 (1) As used in this section, the term "young adult" means  
 88 a person who is 28 years of age or younger who was in the child  
 89 welfare system in the United States after he or she attained the  
 90 age of 14.

91 (2) The department, community-based care lead agencies,  
 92 their subcontracted providers, and housing authorities created  
 93 under s. 421.04 shall develop programs and supports to help  
 94 young adults access all available federal programs and vouchers  
 95 offered by the United States Department of Housing and Urban  
 96 Development relating to housing and housing stability. At a  
 97 minimum, the programs and supports must include all of the  
 98 following:

99 (a) The creation of a list identifying each young adult  
 100 eligible for federal housing programs and vouchers within each

101 community-based care lead agency's geographic service area.

102 (b) A recruitment and communication plan to help  
103 community-based care lead agencies contact and engage with such  
104 young adults.

105 (c) A memorandum of understanding or letter of intent  
106 between each community-based care lead agency and each housing  
107 authority located within the geographic service area of the  
108 community-based care lead agency.

109 (d) Written certification from each community-based care  
110 lead agency to each housing authority located within the lead  
111 agency's geographic service area which verifies that the young  
112 adult was involved in the child welfare system after turning 14  
113 years of age.

114 (e) A detailed list of processes and support services that  
115 are available to a young adult who is participating in a federal  
116 program or voucher.

117 (3) The department, community-based care lead agencies,  
118 and their subcontracted service providers that administer  
119 housing funds for young adults in the child welfare system must  
120 maintain detailed records of all reasonable actions taken to  
121 facilitate a young adult's acquisition of a residential lease.  
122 Reasonable actions include providing assurances to a landlord  
123 that funding will be provided on a monthly basis in order for  
124 the young adult to execute a contract for the lease of  
125 residential property. Such assurances may include cosigning the

126 contract to lease the residential property, providing a  
127 guarantee, or any other form of assurance acceptable to the  
128 landlord. This subsection applies to entities that serve young  
129 adults receiving postsecondary educational services and support  
130 or aftercare services under s. 409.1451 or young adults  
131 receiving continuing care under 39.6251.

132 **Section 3. Section 1009.899, Florida Statutes, is created**  
133 **to read:**

134 1009.899 Fostering Independence Grant Program.—

135 (1) ESTABLISHMENT; PURPOSE.—The Fostering Independence  
136 Grant Program is established within the Department of Education  
137 to ensure that the costs associated with attending a Florida  
138 College System institution or state university are not a barrier  
139 to postsecondary education for eligible young adults, as defined  
140 in s. 409.14521(1), who are or were formerly in foster care and  
141 students who are experiencing homelessness. Participating  
142 Florida College System institutions and state universities shall  
143 administer the program in accordance with rules of the State  
144 Board of Education and regulations of the Board of Governors.

145 (2) ELIGIBILITY.—In order to be eligible for the program,  
146 a student must meet all of the following requirements:

147 (a) Be eligible for a tuition and fee exemption under s.  
148 1009.25(1)(c)1.-4. or (1)(e).

149 (b) Earn a standard high school diploma under s.  
150 1002.3105(5), s. 1003.4281, or s. 1003.4282 or a high school

151 equivalency diploma under s. 1003.435.

152 (c) Be enrolled in at least 9 semester hours, or the  
153 equivalent per term, in a degree program, a certificate program,  
154 or an applied technology program at a Florida College System  
155 institution or state university.

156 (d) Be eligible for a Florida Public Student Assistance  
157 Grant under s. 1009.50.

158 (e) Submit a complete and accurate Free Application for  
159 Federal Student Aid before the disbursement of grant funds.

160 (3) GRANT AWARD.—Subject to legislative appropriation, a  
161 student is eligible to receive a maximum award equal to the  
162 amount needed to cover 100 percent of the estimated annual cost  
163 of attendance to a Florida College System institution or state  
164 university after all other federal and state financial aid and  
165 any financial aid provided by the Florida College System  
166 institution or state university is applied, including, but not  
167 limited to, a Pell Grant or Florida Bright Futures Scholarship.

168 (4) REPORTING.—Each participating Florida College System  
169 institution and state university must report annually to the  
170 Department of Education the retention and graduation rates of  
171 recipients of a grant under this section.

172 **Section 4.** (1) The Office of Program Policy Analysis and  
173 Government Accountability (OPPAGA) shall conduct a study  
174 relating to the barriers that young adults who are or were in  
175 the child welfare system or who are or are at risk of

176 experiencing homelessness, and who are not enrolled in a Florida  
177 College System institution or state university, face when trying  
178 to obtain housing. The study must include recommendations for  
179 overcoming such barriers.

180 (2) OPPAGA shall conduct such study in consultation with  
181 the Department of Children and Families, the Department of  
182 Commerce, public housing authorities, young adults affected by  
183 this act, and other stakeholders as appropriate.

184 (3) OPPAGA shall report its findings and recommendations  
185 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of  
186 the House of Representatives by December 1, 2026.

187 **Section 5.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.