

AB217 - Strengthening Support for Students Experiencing Homelessness in Higher Education

Postsecondary education is increasingly necessary to move out of poverty and homelessness and live a healthy, productive life.¹ In 2020 - 2021, 338 Nevada students indicated they were unaccompanied and experiencing homelessness on their FAFSA.² These students lack familial and financial support to ensure their success in college and face unique barriers to higher education completion.

When Nevada passed AB461 in 2019, it joined eight other states in prioritizing the needs of students experiencing homelessness in higher education.³ However, more is needed to ensure students actually receive the support envisioned by AB461. AB217 would:

- Expand the tuition and fee waivers available to former foster youth to homeless and unaccompanied youth.
- Assure the creation of a liaison role for students experiencing homelessness and make this role more accessible.
- Ensure that priority class registration is available to this population of students.

Homelessness and foster care are often related, with 20% of youth who age out of foster care becoming homeless.⁴ When homeless or unaccompanied youth and youth exiting foster care attempt to access higher education, resources like tuition and fee waivers, priority enrollment, and a single point of contact on campus are critical to success. Many states, like Arkansas, California, Maryland, and Florida,⁵ have expanded the roles of liaisons and extended tuition and fee waivers to students experiencing homelessness. Higher education systems must consider these dual identities and expand resources available to former foster youth to unaccompanied and homeless youth who lack the same financial and social support.

Students experiencing homelessness typically have very limited funding for post-secondary education. They need to complete their degrees as quickly as possible, so they can begin their careers and build financial stability. Priority class registration is necessary, so those students who most need to finish school quickly can access required classes. California expanded priority registration status to accommodate rising seniors, disabled students,⁶ pregnant and parenting students,⁷ active military and veteran students,⁸ homeless and foster students,⁹ and more, without significant burden. Recognizing that most marginalized students fit multiple categories, priority registration should be available to every homeless student so they can graduate on time and affordably.

Finally, FAFSA rules on the federal level have recently changed to allow unaccompanied homeless youth who have previously confirmed unaccompanied status to maintain this determination without going through the tedious process of verifying each year.¹⁰ States like Florida¹¹ are aligning state policies to the new federal requirements, eliminating burdensome paperwork for both students and schools. Nevada should align its internal processes with federal law, as well, to avoid creating confusing, conflicting systems for institutions to manage or erecting barriers to educational continuity for students.

¹ [Strengthening Partnerships Between Education and Homelessness Services | United States Interagency Council on Homelessness \(USICH\)](#)

² [Homeless-FAFSA-Applicants-2018-19-2020-21.docx \(live.com\)](#)

³ [State Policy - SchoolHouse Connection](#)

⁴ [Homelessness & Foster Youth | The National Foster Youth Institute \(nfyi.org\)](#)

⁵ [State Policy - SchoolHouse Connection](#)

⁶ Law section (ca.gov)

⁷ Law section (ca.gov)

⁸ Law section (ca.gov)

⁹ Section 66025.9 - Priority for registration for enrollment for foster youth, former foster youth, homeless youth, or former homeless youth, Cal. Ed. Code § 66025.9 | Casetext Search + Citator

¹⁰ [Federal Student Aid and Homeless Youth](#)

¹¹ [House Bill 1577 \(2022\) - The Florida Senate \(flsenate.gov\)](#)