

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; amending s. 420.622, F.S.; conforming
25 provisions to changes made by the act; creating s.

26 | 1009.702, F.S.; establishing the Fostering
 27 | Independence Grant Program within the Department of
 28 | Education to be administered by Florida College System
 29 | institutions and state universities; providing the
 30 | purpose of the program; providing student eligibility
 31 | requirements; providing for the award and amount of
 32 | grants through the program, subject to legislative
 33 | appropriation; providing reporting requirements for
 34 | Florida College System institutions and state
 35 | universities; requiring the department to contract
 36 | with a certain entity to provide technical assistance
 37 | to Florida College System institutions and state
 38 | universities; requiring the State Board of Education
 39 | and Board of Governors to adopt rules and regulations,
 40 | respectively; providing an effective date.

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 42 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 44 | Section 1. Section 409.1452, Florida Statutes, is amended
 45 | to read:

46 | 409.1452 Collaboration with State University System,
 47 | Florida College System, and Department of Education to assist
 48 | children and young adults who have been or are in foster care or
 49 | are experiencing homelessness; documentation regarding
 50 | eligibility for tuition and fee exemptions.—The department shall

51 collaborate with the State University System, the Florida
52 College System, and the Department of Education to address the
53 need for a comprehensive support structure in the academic arena
54 to assist children and young adults who have been or remain in
55 the foster care system in making the transition from a
56 structured care system into an independent living setting.

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

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

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

72 ~~b.2.~~ Published on the website of the program, institution,
73 or university.

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

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

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

80 b. Assistance with identifying and applying for other
81 available financial aid options for which the student is
82 eligible.

83 c. Academic advising tailored to the individual needs of
84 the student, considering the populations to which he or she
85 belongs.

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

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

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

100 (3) (a) The Department of Education and the Board of

101 Governors of the State University System shall, in consultation
102 with the State Office on Homelessness within the Department of
103 Children and Families, develop best practices and training
104 materials for all employees of each school district program,
105 Florida College System institution, and state university for the
106 purpose of:

107 1. Identifying students experiencing, or at risk of
108 experiencing, homelessness.

109 2. Referring such students to the program, institution, or
110 university's liaison.

111 3. Raising awareness among all students of available
112 services and supports for such population of students.

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

115 1. Annually provide electronically the best practices and
116 training materials to all employees.

117 2. Annually provide electronically awareness materials to
118 students.

119 3. Post awareness materials in public places on its
120 campuses, including students unions and libraries.

121 (4) Each Florida College System institution and state
122 university shall, in consultation with the State Office on
123 Homelessness within the Department of Children and Families,
124 develop plans for prioritizing the placement of students
125 experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing

126 homelessness, including, but not limited to, students eligible
127 for the tuition and fee exemption under s. 1009.25(1)(e), in
128 residence halls and dormitory residences owned by the
129 institution or university.

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

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

137 (b) Year-round housing.

138 (c) Work-study opportunities.

139 (6) Each Florida College System institution and state
140 university is encouraged to develop payment plans for housing
141 and other expenses with payments that coincide with the
142 disbursement of financial aid, including grants, loans, and
143 work-study income for students experiencing homelessness or at
144 risk of experiencing homelessness, including, but not limited
145 to, students eligible for the tuition and fee exemption under s.
146 1009.25(1)(e).

147 (7)~~(3)~~ The Chancellors of the Division of Career and Adult
148 Education, the Florida College System, and the State University
149 System shall report annually to the department specific data,
150 subject to privacy laws, about the students who are exempt from

151 the payment of tuition and fees under s. 1009.25(1)(e) served by
152 the campus liaisons, including academic progress, retention
153 rates for students enrolled in the program, financial aid
154 requested and received, and information required by the National
155 Youth in Transition Database. The report must also include the
156 retention and graduation rates of recipients of grants from the
157 Fostering Independence Grant Program under s. 1009.702 as a
158 distinct group within the report.

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

161 420.622 State Office on Homelessness; Council on
162 Homelessness.—

163 (3) The State Office on Homelessness, pursuant to the
164 policies set by the council and subject to the availability of
165 funding, shall:

166 (p) Provide consultation to the Department of Education
167 and the Board of Governors of the State University System in
168 developing best practices and training materials pursuant to s.
169 409.1452.

170 (q) Provide consultation to Florida College System
171 institutions and state universities in the development and
172 implementation of plans for prioritizing the placement of
173 students experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness,
174 including, but not limited to, students who are eligible for the
175 tuition and fee exemption under s. 1009.25(1)(e), in residence

176 halls and dormitory residences owned or operated by the
 177 institution or university.

178 Section 3. Section 1009.702, Florida Statutes, is created
 179 to read:

180 1009.702 Fostering Independence Grant Program.—

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

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

192 (a) Be eligible for the tuition and fee exemption under s.
 193 1009.25(1)(c) 1.-4 or (e).

194 (b) Be a resident for tuition purposes pursuant to s.
 195 1009.21.

196 (c) Have earned a standard high school diploma under s.
 197 1002.3105(5), s. 1003.4281, or s. 1003.4282 or its equivalent
 198 under s. 1003.435.

199 (d) Be enrolled for at least 9 credit hours per semester,
 200 or the equivalent, in a degree program, a certificate program,

201 or an applied technology program at a Florida College System
202 institution or state university.

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

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

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

222 (5) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The department shall contract
223 with a not-for-profit entity with experience supporting the
224 educational success of youth experience homelessness and youth
225 who are aging out of foster care to provide technical assistance

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226 | to Florida College System institutions and state universities,
227 | state agencies, service providers, homeless service providers,
228 | and residential programs whose students may be eligible to
229 | participate in the grant program.

230 | (6) The State Board of Education and the Board of
231 | Governors shall adopt rules and regulations, respectively, to
232 | administer this section.

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