



## SUMMARY

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AB 2137 improves outcomes for California’s foster youth and students who experience homelessness, by utilizing existing resources to enhance direct student support, streamline better collaboration of services, and reduce gaps in financial aid application completion.

## BACKGROUND

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A 2019 California audit highlighted the state’s failure to serve its students experiencing homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Annually, roughly 225,000 K-12 students are identified as experiencing homelessness, and an additional 46,000 are in foster care. Research shows that these students face immense challenges in attaining a high school diploma and successfully matriculating to higher education.

Statewide data from the 2021-22 academic year indicate that only 61.4% of foster youth and 72.9% of homeless youth successfully complete high school within four years compared to 87% of the general student population. Foster and homeless students are significantly more likely to experience school instability, chronic absenteeism, suspension, and expulsion. These statistics have long-lasting implications for these students, as only 10.8% of foster youth complete a degree by age 23, compared to 36% of their peers. Among 18- to 25-year-old youth experiencing homelessness, the likelihood of completing any college credits is half that of other students.

Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs (FYSCPs) play a crucial role in coordinating between Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and county child welfare agencies. They enhance the identification and enrollment of students in foster care, safeguard their educational rights, and improve high school graduation and college enrollment rates.

Current statutory framework restricts FYSCPs from providing direct services to foster youth students

unless LEAs certify in writing that they are “unable, using any other state, federal, local, or private funds, to provide the direct services” being offered by FYSCPs. While well-intentioned, this requirement has proven to be a barrier to foster youth students receiving essential services like tutoring, mentoring, and counseling.

In addition, with the implementation of “FAFSA for All” (Federal Student Aid) efforts, FAFSA completion rates for all students increased from 57% to 74%, however rates for foster youth increased from 62.6% to just 65%.

Finally, although schools are getting better at identifying their homeless students, over 2,700 districts report zero and hundreds more are likely underreporting their homeless student population, depriving homeless students in those districts from receiving specialized assistance, as required by state and federal law.

## SOLUTION

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AB 2137 supports homeless and foster youth in education by (1) expanding the ability of FYSCPs to provide direct student support, (2) requiring LEAs to provide foster youth student FAFSA/CADAA "opt-out forms" to county FYSCPs and (3) creating accountability for how LEAs are identifying homeless students in LCAPs, with input from local homeless liaisons.

## SUPPORT

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- John Burton Advocates for Youth (Sponsor)
- National Center for Youth Law (Sponsor)

## CONTACT

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<sup>1</sup> California State Auditor Report Number 2019-104. "Youth Experiencing Homelessness."