

Support AB 2137 & AB 2508 to Improve the Educational Outcomes of California's Youth in Foster Care

Background

AB 2137 (Quirk-Silva) & AB 2508 (McCarty) passed out of the California State Legislature and have been referred to Governor Newsom for his signature. These bills would achieve two important goals:

- **AB 2508:** Decrease school absenteeism and increase college enrollment rates among foster youth by expanding eligibility for the CalKIDS college saving account program to students in foster care in grades 1-12. Currently, only foster children in the 1st grade are eligible for the additional \$500 CalKIDS supplement.
- **AB 2137:** Increase school success among foster youth by authorizing county offices of education to use their existing state funding to provide direct services to foster youth. Currently, this is prohibited unless school districts certify in writing that they cannot provide direct services to students in foster care, a requirement that is time consuming and burdensome given that foster youth are spread over 1,019 school districts in California.

Why Are These Changes Required Now?

- Foster youth are falling behind academically, harming their ability to achieve economic security. Today, foster youth in California are 30% less likely to complete high school and 70% less likely to complete a 2- or 4-year degree by age 23. Failure to reach these critical milestones is one reason 25% of youth experience homelessness within two years of exiting foster care.
- Both policy changes require no new funding. AB 2137 is a modest administrative change that gives county offices of education more flexibility to better serve foster youth. AB 2508 would utilize a portion of existing, unspent funding in the CalKIDS program.
- California has a unique responsibility to foster youth, who were removed from their families due to abuse and neglect. When this removal occurred, the State assumed full legal responsibility to responsibly care for them, which includes supporting their education.
- Both policy changes lead to improved educational outcomes for foster youth. Students with just \$500 in a college savings account program were three times more likely to enroll in postsecondary education and four times more likely to graduate. Students were also 40% less likely to be absent 10 or more days compared to students without an account. A recent report on the foster youth programs housed within each county office of education showed an increase in high school graduation rates, attendance rates and school stability rates for students in foster care over a two-year period. The flexibility provided by AB 2137 would help counties more effectively assist foster youth and build upon their demonstrated success.

These bills are supported by a statewide coalition of organizations, public agencies and institutions, totaling 61 in support of AB 2137 and 56 in support of AB 2508.

The full list of supporters can be found [HERE](#).

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