

CLOSING THE GAP:

**Understanding the Impact of the Expanded
Middle Class Scholarship for Students with Foster Care History**



October 15, 2024



Housekeeping

- This webinar is being **recorded** and will be posted online at **jbay.org** and **emailed to webinar registrants**.
- Attendees may turn on or disable **closed captioning**.
- Submit questions in the **"Q&A"** section at any time. Questions will be answered out loud by presenters **at the end** of the webinar. Chat is not available for this webinar.

Panelists

Jessica Petrass

Director of Education, John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)

Senator Angelique Ashby

California State Senator, 8th District

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Youth Advocate, John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)



Paying for College as a Student with Foster Care History

Findings and Recommendations from Discussions with Students in California

Laura Packard Tucker, Devlin Hanson, and Annabel Stattelman-Scanlan

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Young people with foster care history want to attend college but face financial barriers to enrollment and graduation. To help address this problem, California recently created the Middle-Class Scholarship (MCS) for Foster Youth, which is available to students with foster care history attending public, four-year colleges and universities in state. Are these students receiving the financial support needed to achieve their educational goals? How do they pay for college, including both tuition and nontuition costs? And how do they think educational funding programs, including the MCS for Foster Youth program, could be improved?

To answer these questions and better understand the MCS, we first examined data on MCS utilization in the 2023–24 academic year—the first year the program was made available. We also spoke to 57 students with foster care history who were eligible for the MCS. We asked students what they knew about funding and financial aid opportunities before they enrolled in college, how they were paying for their postsecondary education, and their opinions regarding how educational funding programs, including the MCS, could be improved.

Background

In California, more than 18,000 young people who self-identified as having foster care history were enrolled in postsecondary education in fall 2023.¹ Students with foster care history want to pursue postsecondary education, but—even at lower-cost institutions—the net price is more than 100 percent

Paying for College as a Student with Foster Care History: Findings and Recommendations from Discussions with Students in California

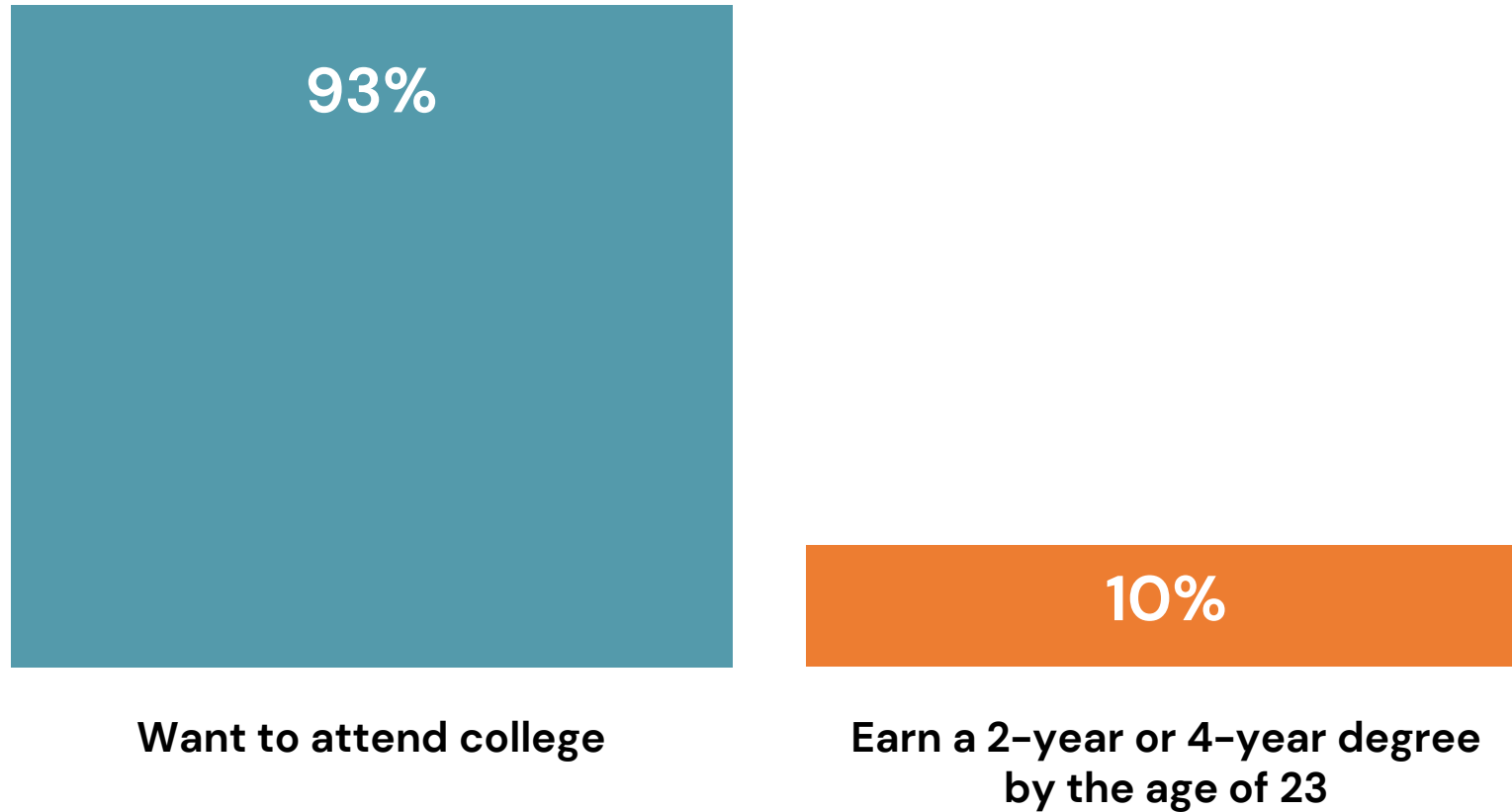
Urban Institute, Laura Packard Tucker, Devlin Hanson, and Annabel Stattelman-Scanlan

<https://www.urbaninstitute.org/resources/paying-for-college/>

AGENDA

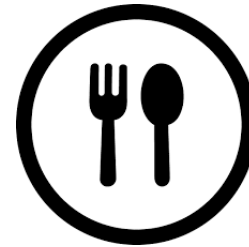
1. Background and overview of the Middle Class Scholarship (MCS)
2. Remarks from Senator Ashby
3. Utilization data of the MCS for Foster Youth
4. Student focus group findings and recommendations
5. Student Voice
6. Q&A

FOSTER YOUTH COLLEGE ASPIRATIONS VS. COLLEGE REALITIES



Rising Cost of Attendance

- Cost of Attendance: the **total amount** is costs to attend college, including **tuition, fees, and non-tuition costs**, such as housing, books, supplies, meals, etc.



- Total **COA tripled in the US** between 1980–2021, even accounting for inflation



Most common difficulty that students with a foster care history report is having to balance school and work



Less than 10 percent of students age 21 with foster care history report using money from a friend or relative to pay for college compared to 72% of all students

There is a lot of money available!

Common financial aid awards for 2024-25 full-time students

	CSU	UC	California Community College
Federal Pell Grant	Up to \$7,395	Up to \$7,395	Up to \$7,395
Cal Grant Foster Youth Access Award for Non-Tuition Costs (in foster care after the age of 13)	Up to \$6,000	Up to \$6,000	Up to \$6,000
Cal Grant Tuition & fees	Up to \$6,084 (Full Tuition & Fees)	Up to \$14,436 (Full Tuition and Fees)	N/A
CA College Promise Grant tuition waiver			Approx. \$1,104 in value.
Chafee Grant (6+ units & in foster care age 16-18)	Up to \$5,000	Up to \$5,000	Up to \$5,000
Student Success Completion Grant (12+ units & in foster care after the age of 13)			\$10,500
Total:	\$24,479	\$32,831	\$29,999

Not all
students
know about
these
resources

Only 58% of students used
the Chafee Grant to pay for
college.

Only 61% of students used
the Pell Grant to pay for
college.

Middle Class Scholarship for Foster Youth

Language governing this funding was included in SB 117, the higher education budget trailer bill for the 2023-24 California state budget.

- Provides low-to middle-income undergraduate students with a scholarship if enrolled in a UC or CSU, or bachelor's program at a community college.
- Individual award amounts are based on each college's Cost of Attendance (COA).
- After accounting for other federal, state, and institutional aid and a **"self-help" student contribution (\$7,898 in 2023-24)**:
 - MCS covers roughly 35% of the remaining unmet need for independent non-foster youth.
 - MCS covers **100% of remaining unmet need for current and former foster youth.**
- Students are awarded **up to four years** depending on their educational level when first awarded (or 5 years for a teaching credential).

Student Example in 2023–24:



- A student is attending a UC and **COA is \$45,000.**
- They receive **\$30,000 in federal, state and institutional aid.**
- The student is responsible for a “**self-help**” **contribution of \$7,898.**
- Their **remaining unmet need** is = \$7,102.
- If they are a current or former foster youth, their **MCS award = \$7,102.**

Remarks from Senator Angelique Ashby



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Understanding the Middle Class Scholarship for Foster Youth

- Urban conducted a study in Spring/Summer of 2024
 - Examined data on MCS use in the 2023-24 academic year
 - Conducted 13 focus groups
 - Spoke to 57 students with foster care history who could have been eligible for the MCS for Foster Youth
 - These students were part-time or full-time students at a UC or CSU

MCS for Foster Youth Utilization in 2023-24 School Year

To receive the MCS, students must be enrolled in either a UC, CSU, or bachelor's degree program at a California community college.

In academic year 2023-24...

796

students with
foster care history
were eligible

\$4.6m

in MCS funding
was distributed to
these students

0.8%

of MCS funding is
spent on students
with foster care
history

MCS for Foster Youth Trends

- Most (95%) were attending CSUs, compared to 71% of all other students receiving MCS
- Half received \$4.5k or more in MCS funding, compared to \$1.9 for other students
- 75% were full-time, compared to 85% of other students
- 23% also received Chafee funding

Who did not receive MCS for foster youth

- 57% of students with foster care history did not meet the unmet need requirement compared to 17% of other students
 - Of those,
 - 55% received Chafee grants
 - They had an average of \$632 in unmet need

Student Perspectives on the MCS for Foster Youth and Paying for College

Students are not getting the information they need about financial aid to make informed decisions.

“CPS agents were constantly informing me and my peers that there is a mass amount of funding and schooling is free, but...that is [a] highly inaccurate statement. It doesn’t include the pros and cons—the ifs and buts—that come with that money.”



Photo source: JBAY

The information students received impacted their college decisions.

“But with emancipating there’s a huge possibility of you becoming homeless...In my instance if I knew there were more resources, I would have gone straight to college after graduating from high school, but instead I joined the military because I thought it was my only option because I could use the GI bill once I was done with my service. At the time it allowed me a sense of security by giving me a job and housing.”

Many students attended community college, postponed college, or choose a college that they thought cost less, even if it was not the best academic fit.



Photo source: JBAY

“If I had known [about the Chafee grant], I probably would have skipped community college and just came straight to [my current four-year college]. I probably would have already graduated a long time ago...I probably could have saved a lot of time.”

Most students had tuition covered by their financial aid, but many had to pay for a substantial portion of their living expenses, usually through employment earnings.

“Most if not all my money goes toward living expenses as well as books and getting to school and trying to stay in school, having a roof and making sure everything is good....In between semesters are the roughest points and it’s hard to save for that because it’s not cheap out here.”



Photo source: JBAY

Almost all students who worked explained that having to work negatively impacted their academic success and mental health while in college.



“It’s hard because I don’t get the luxury of spending all day in the library. One thing I’ve always felt is that I don’t do as good academically because I just don’t have the resources and time. If I didn’t have to work more than full time and do all these things to try and earn money, I probably could focus better. I just do the best that I can and that’s good enough for me.”

Photo source: JBAY

Students provided a number of valuable recommendations

1. Reconsider **cost-of-living** calculations
2. Remove **age caps**
3. Reduce the **self-help** contribution of MCS for Foster Youth

“Speaking specifically about the MCS, some students felt that the self-help contribution was too high: “Who decided to have it be that amount? That is a lot of money. \$800 is doable. \$8,000 is a lot of money. Now students are going to be more stressed out.”

Students provided a number of valuable recommendations

- 4. Increase efficiency
- 5. Relax academic performance standards
- 6. Increase the knowledge of the people supporting them



Photo source: JBAY

Students provided a number of valuable recommendations



Photo source: JBAY

7. Provide in-person and peer support

8. Improve transparency and messaging

- Discuss early and often
- Align message to audience
- Provide info in-person
- Be clear about eligibility
- Keep information up to date

Thank you!

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Link to full report

Wednesday's Story





Additional JBAY Resources

- *College Costs Uncovered: An Examination of the Accuracy of College COA Budgets and Implications for Student Success* [HERE](#)
- Middle Class Scholarship for Foster Youth & Student Success Completion Grant for Foster Youth FAQ's [HERE](#)
- Comprehensive financial aid resources for students who have experienced foster care or homelessness [HERE](#)
- Completing the FAFSA/CADAA: A How-To for Adult Supporters of Youth with Experience with Foster Care or Homelessness, November 20th, 10am–11:30am. Register [HERE](#)

Q&A

Please ask questions using the “Q&A” Zoom function.

THANK YOU

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