

AB 2766 (Ahrens): Frequently Asked Questions

Updated as of February 25, 2026

1. What does AB 2766 seek to do?

AB 2766 will improve college access, housing stability, and timely degree completion for current and former foster youth and students experiencing homelessness by enacting the following four provisions:

- a. Requires the California Community Colleges (CCC) to provide priority access to housing maintained by the institution to current and former foster youth and students experiencing homelessness, including priority for housing facilities that are open during academic breaks.
- b. Requires CCCs, California State Universities (CSU), and University of California (UC) campuses to include questions in campus housing applications to identify eligible foster youth and students experiencing homelessness, and to prominently display information on the campus website describing priority housing benefits and eligibility criteria.
- c. Requires CCCs, CSUs, and UC campuses to defer or waive housing deposits and other mandatory housing fees that must be paid before financial aid is disbursed for students with experience in foster care or homelessness.
- d. Aligns priority registration eligibility at CCCs with existing NextUp eligibility.

Relevant provisions take effect for UC campuses only to the extent that the Regents of the University of California, by appropriate resolution, make these provisions applicable.

2. Why is this bill necessary?

Foster youth and students experiencing homelessness face significant barriers in higher education, resulting in markedly lower college completion rates than their peers. By age 29, only [12 percent](#) of foster youth and [15 percent](#) of students who have experienced homelessness complete a two-year or four-year degree, compared with [49 percent](#) of the general student population. Housing instability is a major driver of these disparities.

[Nearly half](#) of foster youth attending community college experience homelessness, as do [25 percent](#) of foster youth enrolled in the CSU system. Students who are homeless at the time of college entry have an immediate need for priority access to housing, while those who have recently experienced homelessness remain at elevated risk of becoming homeless again. [Research](#) has demonstrated a clear connection between a lack of stable housing and failure to persist in and complete postsecondary education. Addressing students' housing needs is not only a critical homelessness-prevention strategy and an essential component of improving postsecondary access, persistence, and completion, but also a strategy for reducing equity gaps.

3. What are the current requirements in state law related to priority housing for students with experience in foster care and homelessness?

CSUs are required to provide priority access to university housing. CSUs must also provide priority access to any facilities open year-round or those open for occupation during the most days in the calendar year and cannot charge additional fees for occupation during academic breaks. CCCS are requested to do the same, and UCs are required to do so if adopted by the Regents of the University of California.

4. How are foster youth and homeless youth defined for the purposes of priority housing for AB 2766?

A “foster youth” is defined as a “current or former foster youth.”

A “homeless youth” is a student under 25 years of age who lacks fixed, regular, and adequate housing and has been verified by at least one of the following:

- (A) A homeless services provider.
- (B) A federal TRIO program or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program
- (C) A financial aid administrator
- (D) A campus homeless and foster student liaison
- (E) For American Indian students, a representative of the student’s tribe or a representative of a tribal organization that is a homeless services provider.

Formerly homeless youth are those who were verified at any time during the 24 months immediately preceding the receipt of the youth’s application for admission by a postsecondary educational institution.

A student who is verified as a homeless youth retains that status for a period of six years from the date of admission to the postsecondary educational institution.

5. How many students are anticipated to be eligible for priority housing under AB 2766?

While the exact number of students who will take advantage of priority housing is difficult to estimate, [data](#) from the California Community Colleges system indicate that students who self-identify as foster youth make up less than 2 percent of the overall student population, and those who identify as experiencing homelessness comprise just 1.3 percent. Among students who identify as foster youth, only about one in six meets the eligibility criteria for NextUp, which, like priority housing, requires having been in foster care after age 13 and being under age 25 at the time of program enrollment.

6. Does this bill apply to community colleges that do not have campus housing?

Only the provisions related to priority registration apply to a community college that does not have campus housing.

7. What if a college does not offer housing over academic breaks?

An institution that does not offer housing over academic breaks is not obligated to provide housing during periods when campus housing is closed to current and former foster youth and students experiencing homelessness.

8. Why does the bill require colleges to include a question about foster youth and housing insecurity on student housing applications?

This provision is designed to ensure that students with heightened housing needs are identified early in the process. Many foster youth and students experiencing homelessness are eligible for priority housing or related supports, but those benefits can only be provided if campuses know who those students are. Without a clear, standardized question, identification is inconsistent and often depends on students having an awareness of the services available to them before arriving on campus. Including this question creates a simple, low-cost way for colleges to proactively connect students to appropriate housing options, coordinate across campus departments, and reduce the risk that vulnerable students fall through the cracks at a critical point in their enrollment.

9. Does the bill specify what action a campus needs to take for students who identify on the housing application as a foster or homeless youth?

The bill does not specify any specific action that must be taken based on the information obtained through the housing application. Institutions have flexibility regarding how they use this information and are not required to automatically offer priority access and fee deferrals to those who indicate this status. For example, a university may choose instead to include a pop-up on the application or send an automated email to these students with information about available benefits and next steps to verify their eligibility.

10. If a student identifies as a foster or homeless youth on the housing application, does the bill specify how the institution must verify that information?

While the bill defines acceptable verification sources for homeless youth, verification sources for foster youth are not defined and there is no specific verification protocol mandated by the bill. For example, a housing department could rely on their institution's foster youth program and/or basic needs center to conduct verification or could manage the verification process internally.

11. Does providing a fee deferral or waiver impact a student’s eligibility for financial aid?

No, the benefits afforded through this bill have no impact on the amount that a student is eligible to receive from financial aid as any applicable fees are either deferred or waived. In addition, as financial aid offices apply and disburse aid based on whatever information is received from their institutions’ housing and billing offices, financial aid offices are in no way impacted by the provisions of this bill.

12. Why should colleges clearly display their priority housing policies for foster youth and students experiencing homelessness on their websites?

This provision will ensure transparency and equal access to information. These students often must make housing decisions with limited support and may be unaware of the benefits available to them. A 2025 audit conducted by JBAY found that only one CSU had information about priority housing for students with experience in foster care or homelessness clearly posted on their campus housing web page. When information is not clearly posted, students may fail to request accommodations they are entitled to receive. Requiring colleges to prominently and clearly explain their policies helps students understand their options, reduces reliance on word-of-mouth, and ensures that priority housing protections are implemented consistently and as intended.

13. Is AB 2766 duplicative of existing foster youth and basic needs support programs?

No. The provisions of AB 2766 complement existing student support programs. The components of the bill provide additional tools not currently available to these programs to help support student success and more easily identify eligible students.

14. Why should foster youth and homeless youth students be allowed to defer or waive housing deposits until financial aid is disbursed?

Unlike many of their peers, foster and homeless youth often lack family financial support or savings to cover even nominal housing deposit costs and are often already struggling to meet their basic needs. When deposits are due before financial aid is disbursed, the requirement can present an insurmountable barrier for these students that can be the beginning of a cascade of challenges that jeopardizes their ability to succeed or even to enroll. Deferring or waiving housing deposits until aid is received aligns institutional practices with the realities of students’ finances, prevents otherwise qualified students from being shut out of stable housing, and removes an avoidable obstacle to enrollment and persistence for two extremely disadvantaged student subpopulations.

15. Are there any other requirements that students need to meet to qualify for a fee deferral?

Yes, to qualify, students must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if applicable, a California Dream Act application, for the academic year in which the housing is sought.

16. Are institutions required to defer housing deposits or other related fees if they contract with a 3rd party vendor for housing services?

Yes, housing managed by a third-party property manager remains subject to these requirements.

17. What if a student is unable to pay for their housing deposits or other related fees after they are deferred?

In most cases, housing deposits and related fees are automatically deducted from a student's financial aid before any remaining funds are released to the student. If a student's financial aid award is insufficient to cover outstanding housing charges, the bill permits the campus to require payment of the deferred costs. However, the campus must first provide written notice informing the student that their financial aid did not fully cover the charges and allow at least 30 days for payment. During that 30-day period, campuses are prohibited from assessing late fees, penalties, or interest.

18. Why does the bill require community colleges to align priority registration eligibility with NextUp eligibility?

NextUp eligibility was recently expanded to allow students who were under age 25 at the time they entered the program to continue receiving services after turning 25, through college completion. However, eligibility for priority registration still ends at age 25, creating a mismatch in benefits and a gap in which students lose access to priority enrollment before they finish their programs. Without priority registration, these students face greater difficulty enrolling in required courses, which can delay progress toward timely completion of their intended credentials.

19. How many additional students are anticipated to be eligible for priority registration under AB 2766?

The California Community College Chancellor's Office estimates that roughly 900 NextUp participants will be newly eligible for priority registration systemwide.

20. Does this bill require a budget augmentation?

This bill does not require a budget augmentation. Updating existing policies, housing applications, and campus websites requires minimal work and can be easily accommodated within existing workloads. Housing deposits are deferred not waived, and therefore no additional costs are incurred. The bill specifies that it does not waive a student's ultimate responsibility for payment of housing-related costs or require a campus to forgive those costs.