

# Senate Bill 1023 – Foster Youth Attending Community College

Senator Carol Liu

Introduced February 14, 2014

## **BACKGROUND**

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Currently in California, there are 57,000 children and youth in foster care. These young people face many serious challenges, including disproportionately low rates of educational attainment.

According to a 2013 study, students in foster care have unique characteristics that justify their identification as a separate at-risk student subgroup. Students in foster care as a group showed an achievement gap similar to English learners and to students with disabilities.

Students in foster care have the lowest graduation rate among all comparison groups and are more likely than all comparison groups to drop out.

[http://cftl.org/documents/2013/IAG/Invisible\\_Achievement\\_Gap\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://cftl.org/documents/2013/IAG/Invisible_Achievement_Gap_Full_Report.pdf)

Not surprisingly, these academic disadvantages follow foster youth into higher education, with fewer foster youth entering community college and fewer persisting past the first year of study. According to a 2013 study, youth in foster care were 47% less likely to enter community college than the general student population and 51% less likely to return after the first year.

A key reason why foster youth fail to succeed in community college is the lack of support on campus to meet their unique needs. A dedicated support program for foster youth would offer these students access to vital supports.

## **SOLUTION**

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This bill:

- Authorizes community college districts to apply for funding to establish a supplemental component of the existing Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) program to provide support services to meet the unique needs of foster youth.
- Provides for support services including counseling and mental health services, career counseling, matriculation and transfer counseling, monitoring of academic progress, tutoring and mentoring, independent living skills, housing assistance, child care and transportation allowances, allowances for books and supplies, frequent in-person contact, and other related services.
- Authorizes participants to be enrolled in at least 9 units, rather than the required full-time load of 12 units.
- Defines current and former foster youth as a person whose dependency in California was established by the court on or after the youth's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and who is younger than age 26.
- Requires a biennial report describing efforts to serve students, including a review on a campus-by-campus basis of the enrollment, retention, transfer, and completion rates.

## **SUPPORTERS**

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John Burton Foundation

## **OPPOSITION**

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None