

California State Senate

SENATOR
JOHN LAIRD

SEVENTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



Senate Bill 885 – Supporting Foster Youth in Community Colleges

SUMMARY

Senate Bill 885 will expand the NextUp program to additional campuses within the California Community College (CCC) system by removing an existing cap on the number of districts that can receive funding. The bill also streamlines administration of the program and creates flexibility around unit enrollment requirements.

BACKGROUND

The CCC system serves more than 2.1 million students, and about 30,000 of them identify as current or former foster youth. Unfortunately, many foster youth experience obstacles to successful postsecondary preparation and degree completion. This group faces instability while in foster care, increased rates of high school dropout, and are four times more likely to change schools. Together, these lead to poor educational outcomes; in California, just 11% obtain a college degree by age 23.

In 2014, Senator Carol Liu authored Senate Bill 1023 (Chapter 771, Statutes of 2014), which established the NextUp program for current and foster youth enrolled in community college. The program provides a combination of student centered supports and direct financial assistance to support students with experience in foster care to complete their desired college credential.

A recent report published by the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) found that 99.5% of participating students reported that the program helped them academically. Unfortunately, the success of this program is limited

to only 20 CCC districts, which has resulted in just 46 of the 116 colleges offering the program.

Additionally, over the six years that the program has been in place, it has become clear that the existing 9-unit enrollment requirement fails to recognize the unique and severe barriers foster youth face as they embark upon post-secondary education. These barriers, which stem from a combination of the aftermath of trauma, academic challenges, a lack of family support and competing life responsibilities necessitate greater flexibility.

THIS BILL

Senate Bill 885 will remove the existing cap on the number of CCC districts that can receive NextUp dollars. The bill will also make administrative updates including changing the statutory name of the program from the Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support program to NextUp, providing flexibility to the CCCCCO regarding the process for how new funds are allocated, and reducing the CCCCCO set-aside from five percent to one percent.

Finally, SB 885 will allow students to enroll in NextUp with fewer than nine units, if part of an academic plan designed to move the student towards subsequent enrollment in at least nine units.

SPONSOR

John Burton Advocates for Youth (sponsor)
California Youth Connection (co-sponsor)
Student Senate for California Community Colleges (co-sponsor)