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Young People Who Lived in Foster Care Need Support for Post-Secondary Education

HB 2482 - Tuition Waivers for Foster Youth

Help youth from foster care go to college by permanently establishing the Tuition Waiver Program at Arizona state universities and community colleges. Otherwise, the current five-year Pilot Program will expire on June 30, 2018.ⁱ

HB 2482 will continue the Tuition Waiver Program for Foster Youth at state universities and community colleges. Eligibility criteria continues to include that the student from foster care:

- Be a U.S. citizen or a noncitizen who is lawfully present;
- Have total personal assets, not including scholarships or grants that are worth less than \$10,000;
- Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and
- Remain in good standing with the policies established by the university or community college at which the person is enrolled.

HB 2482 provides the following improvements to support students from foster care:

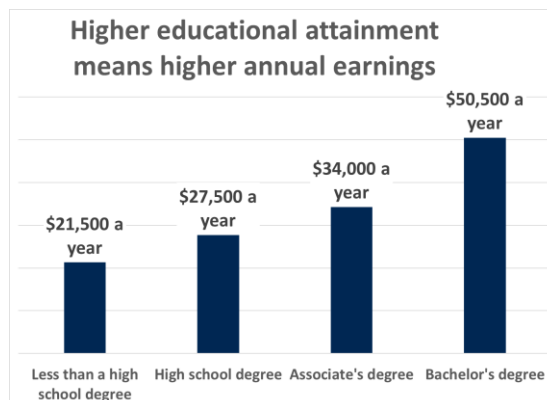
- Increases the age of eligibility to 26 from 23 which recognizes that many young people from foster care need more time to complete their college degree program. Only 33% of Arizona's foster youth enrolled in grade 12 graduated from high school in 2012/13, compared to 78% for non-system involved youth.ⁱⁱ
- Decreases the age of eligibility from 16 to 13 for a youth who was in foster care or adopted from foster care which recognizes that the FAFSA application considers these young people independent and responsible for their own costs of education.
- Requires a person to be in foster care for a cumulative period of at least six months.
- Requires tuition costs and mandatory fees be applied at universities before other federal and public grants and scholarships which recognizes the additional costs of education (including housing, meals, transportation, books, and class fees) remain a significant barrier to college completion for young people from foster care.
- Removes the requirement that the student complete at least 30 hours of volunteer service each academic year as this is an administrative burden on the institutions and difficult to track.



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What's important to know:

- For the Academic Years 2013-14 thru 2016-17, \$720,098 in tuition costs and mandatory fees were waived at Arizona community colleges and universities making it possible for 182 students from foster care to go to college.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Already 37 students have graduated with the assistance of the Tuition Waiver.^{iv}
- The Arizona Auditor General Performance Audit stated: *"Waiver recipients reported that the waiver positively impacted their ability to attend college and succeed by easing financial constraints. Specifically, waiver recipients reported that pursuing a college education is a vital step in improving their life circumstances and that receiving a waiver helped them attend college when they otherwise might not have been able to afford it."*^v
- 2-9% of foster youth earn a college degree by age 26, compared to 46% of non-foster youth.^{vi}
- On virtually every measure of economic well-being and career attainment - young college graduates are outperforming their peers with less education.^{vii} People with a bachelor's degree have 82% higher median earnings than those with just a high school diploma.
- Tuition waivers give young people from foster care a chance to pursue a career that will provide them with positive opportunities and higher earnings potential throughout their adult lives,



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *American Community Survey 2016*

ⁱ SB 1208, Laws of 2013, ARS §15-1809

ⁱⁱ Barrat, V. X., Berliner, B. and Felida, N. J., (2015). *Arizona's Invisible Achievement Gap: Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care in the State's Public Schools*. San Francisco: WestEd.

ⁱⁱⁱ Email from Foster Care to Success to Children's Action Alliance, February 13, 2018.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Performance Audit June 2017 Report 17-106 https://www.azauditor.gov/sites/default/files/17-106_Report.pdf

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/>