
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6563

AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR THE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING PROGRAM OFFERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OF ADOPTED YOUTH.

SUMMARY

This bill (1) increases the age of eligibility for the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) postsecondary education funding program for youth who are committed to DCF and (2) requires the department to amend its rules and regulations to reflect these increases.

Additionally, the bill requires DCF, by January 1, 2024, to establish a pilot program to provide financial assistance for the postsecondary education funding of any youth adopted in Connecticut through an out-of-state foster care program. It appropriates \$150,000 to DCF from the General Fund in FY 24 to administer the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

DCF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING PROGRAM

Under the bill, the "postsecondary education funding program" is DCF's program that provides funding to youths who remain committed to DCF at age 18 and meet the requirements in the department's policies and regulations (DCF policy 28-1).

The bill increases, from 21 to 26, the age until which a youth can qualify for postsecondary education funding. It also increases, from 23 to 28, the age until which a youth enrolled in a postsecondary education program (i.e., any program that leads to an academic degree or certification in a vocation or employment training) is eligible for funding to complete the postsecondary education program, so long as he or she

continues to meet DCF-established requirements.

The bill also requires any youth eligible to receive postsecondary education funding under the program to complete, as a condition of receiving the funding, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and applications for any appropriate scholarships and grants, including those on the DCF scholarship application portal.

The bill specifies that its provisions should not be construed to require DCF to continue to provide case management services for any youth over age 21 who begins to receive funding under the postsecondary education funding program.

DCF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING PILOT PROGRAM

Eligibility

The bill requires DCF, by January 1, 2024, to establish a pilot program to provide financial assistance for the postsecondary education funding of any youth who meets the following requirements:

1. is adopted by a Connecticut resident through another state's foster care program on or after January 1, 2005;
2. completes the FAFSA for each year they are enrolled in the DCF postsecondary education program; and
3. meets and continues to meet the postsecondary education assistance program requirements set forth in current DCF policy, except the requirement that the youth must be adopted through the department's foster care program (DCF policy 25-2).

Under the bill, a youth who qualifies for this financial assistance may apply to the department in a form and manner the DCF commissioner chooses, and the commissioner must approve applications until the youth completes the postsecondary education program. The program's benefits are available to eligible youth within available funds and on a first-come, first-served basis.

Financial Assistance

The bill requires the financial assistance to include the cost of tuition, fees, room and board, and books but to not exceed the maximum cost of attendance at a state university within the Connecticut State University System for an in-state, full-time residential student. The financial assistance may be paid to the postsecondary education program on a semester, trimester, or quarterly basis as required.

Reporting

By January 1, 2025, the bill requires DCF to submit a report to the Appropriations, Children’s, and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees on the pilot program and include the (1) number of youths who received financial assistance, (2) amount of financial assistance, and (3) feasibility of making the pilot program permanent.

BACKGROUND

Legislative History

The House referred the bill (File 85) to the Committee on Children, which reported a substitute (1) requiring that the youth in the postsecondary funding program remain committed to DCF at age 18, (2) adding the FAFSA requirement, and (3) adding the pilot program and its funding.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 4 (02/28/2023)

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 5 (04/04/2023)