As Introduced

136th General Assembly
Regular Session
2025-2026

S. B. No. 13

Senator Reynolds

A BILL

To enact sections 3301.96 and 3333.89 of the Revised Code to establish the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program, to require the Department of Education and Workforce to hire a full-time school foster care liaison, and to make an appropriation for the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That sections 3301.96 and 3333.89 of the Revised Code be enacted to read as follows:

Sec. 3301.96. (A) As used in this section:

(1) "School of origin" means the school in which a student was enrolled at the time of each placement into foster care. If the student's foster care placement changes, the school of origin is the school in which the student is enrolled at the time of the change in placement. "School of origin" includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for feeder school or zone patterns when the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin. When there is more than one potential school of origin, the department of education

and workforce, or school foster care liaison under division (B) of this section, shall designate the school of origin using the student's input.

(2) "Student placed in foster care" means a child who at any time during an academic semester or term is in foster care, including any child who is in the custody of a public children's services agency or private child placing agency or otherwise placed with a licensed foster caregiver. "Student placed in foster care" includes a child who transfers enrollment as a result of being returned to the child's home at the conclusion of the child's placement.

(B) If the director of education and workforce determines that sufficient funds are available from general revenue fund appropriations made to the department of education and workforce, the department shall hire a full-time school foster care liaison. The school foster care liaison shall work with public children services agencies, private child placing agencies, and the department of job and family services to facilitate services to keep students placed in foster care in the student's school of origin or, if the public children services agency or private child placing agency determines that it is not in a student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, facilitate the prompt and appropriate placement, transfer, and enrollment of such a student in another public school.

The school foster care liaison's specific duties include:

(1) Responding to a request from a public children services agency or private child placing agency for input from a school district or school concerning the determination of whether it is in the best interest of the student placed in

foster care to remain in the school of origin;

(2) Collaborating with the public children services agency or private child placing agency to ensure that any necessary transportation and services are provided for the student placed in foster care to remain in the student's school of origin;

(3) If a public children services agency or private child placing agency determines that it is not in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, working with the agency, juvenile probation officer, parents, guardian ad litem or counsel for the student, and foster caregivers to ensure that the student is enrolled in a new school immediately with transition planning, and that the student's complete education information and records are requested immediately by the student's new school upon enrollment;

(4) Upon receiving the required notification and invitation, participating in a transition planning meeting regarding the enrollment in a public school of a student placed in foster care from a state-licensed day treatment facility, or hospital, or having a designee participate in the meeting;

(5) Participating, or having the liaison's designee participate, in any interagency collaboration team or threat assessment team centered on students placed in foster care, which the school district or school may develop or on which the school district or school may be invited to participate;

(6) Providing students placed in foster care with information about the foster-to-college scholarship program established in section 3333.89 of the Revised Code.

Sec. 3333.89. (A) As used in this section:

(1) "Chafee ETV grant" means an educational and training

voucher program grant made pursuant to the "John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood," 42 U.S.C. 677.

(2) "Cost of attendance" has the same meaning as in section 3333.37 of the Revised Code.

(3) "Federal need analysis" means the methodology determined by the United States department of education to determine the amount of a student's financial need to pay for postsecondary education.

(4) "Institution of higher education" has the same meaning as in section 3345.19 of the Revised Code.

(5) "Noncertified kinship care" means a public children services agency or private child placing agency has placed a child in the care of a kinship caregiver, as defined in section 5101.85 of the Revised Code, who has not met the requirements for a foster home certificate issued under section 5103.03 of the Revised Code or has chosen not to pursue that certificate.

(6) "Qualifying student" means a resident of Ohio as defined in section 3333.31 of the Revised Code, who has been accepted for enrollment at an institution of higher education who has been placed in either of the following:

(a) Foster care at any time on or after the student's thirteenth birthday;

(b) Noncertified kinship care at any time on or after the student's thirteenth birthday and was, at any time, adjudicated an abused child as defined in section 2151.031 of the Revised Code, a neglected child as defined in section 2151.03 of the Revised Code, or a dependent child as defined in section 2151.04 of the Revised Code.

(B)(1) The foster-to-college scholarship program is established. Under the program, beginning in the 2025-2026 academic year, each qualifying student shall be awarded a foster-to-college scholarship based on the student's federal need analysis. The amount of the foster-to-college scholarship shall equal the applicant's recognized cost of attendance after deducting all of the following:

(a) The student aid index as calculated by the federal need analysis;

(b) The amount of any federal Pell grant award for which the applicant is eligible;

(c) The amount of any state grant;

(d) The federal supplemental educational opportunity grant;

(e) The Ohio college opportunity grant, under section 3333.122 of the Revised Code;

(f) The amount of any other state and federal gift aid;

(g) The Chafee ETV grant;

(h) Extended foster care benefits under 42 U.S.C. 675(8)(B);

(i) The amount of any private grants or scholarships, excluding grants and scholarships provided by the private institution of higher education in which the eligible student is enrolled;

(j) For public institutions, the sum of all institutional grants, scholarships, tuition waivers, and tuition remission amounts.

(2) The foster scholarship shall be paid directly to the participating institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled.

(3) An eligible private institution may choose not to participate in the foster-to-college scholarship program established under this section. To opt out, the institution shall provide notice to the chancellor of higher education by the first day of September for the next academic year.

(4) An eligible private institution that chooses to participate in the program and accepts a student's application to attend the institution shall provide institutional grants, scholarships, tuition waivers, or tuition remission in an amount equal to the difference between the institution's cost of attendance and the sum of the scholarship under this division and the sum of the amounts in divisions (B)(1)(a) to (j) of this section.

(C) In order to receive a scholarship under the program, the qualifying student shall do all of the following:

(1) Complete the free application for federal student aid, including acknowledgement of past or current foster care placement;

(2) If eligible, complete the application for a Chafee ETV grant;

(3) Be enrolled in courses leading toward a bachelor's degree, a postgraduate degree, an associate's degree, an industry-recognized credential, or a certificate of completion at an institution of higher education;

(4) Request financial assistance in accordance with policies set forth by the institution of higher education;

(5) Remain in satisfactory academic standing in accordance with the academic policies of the institution of higher education and be making progress toward completion of the requirements of the educational program in which the student is enrolled.

(D)(1) Eligible students shall apply to participate in the program in a form and manner prescribed by the chancellor. The chancellor shall approve each qualifying student who applies and who has a remaining cost of attendance for the period in which the application is approved after all other financial aid for which that applicant qualifies has been applied to the applicant's account at the institution. The chancellor shall approve applications in the order in which they are received. The amount of scholarships awarded shall not exceed the amount appropriated for that purpose.

(2) The chancellor shall pay to each institution of higher education in which a participant who receives a scholarship described in division (B) of this section is enrolled the amount of the scholarship awarded under that division.

(E) The chancellor shall enter into an agreement with the same organization engaged by the department of job and family services to administer the Chafee ETV program to employ four full-time employees to serve as foster care student navigators and assist prospective qualifying students in applying for and enrolling in institutions of higher education and the foster-to-college scholarship program. The navigators shall work with school district and school foster care liaisons to identify prospective qualifying students. A navigator shall provide guidance to prospective qualifying students with selecting institutions and programs in which the student may wish to

enroll. A navigator shall, at the request of a student, assist the student with completing an institution's application for admission, the free application for federal student aid, and, if eligible, the application for a Chafee ETV grant.

(F)(1) The chancellor shall, in accordance with Chapter 119. of the Revised Code, adopt rules necessary to administer this section.

(2) Notwithstanding any provision of section 121.95 of the Revised Code to the contrary, a regulatory restriction contained in a rule adopted under division (F) of this section is not subject to sections 121.95 to 121.953 of the Revised Code.

Section 2. All items in this act are hereby appropriated as designated out of any moneys in the state treasury to the credit of the designated fund. For all operating appropriations made in this act, those in the first column are for fiscal year 2026 and those in the second column are for fiscal year 2027. The operating appropriations made in this act are in addition to any other operating appropriations made for these fiscal years.

Section 3.

1	2	3	4	5
A		BOR DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION		
B	Dedicated Purpose Fund Group			
C	5AM1 235689	Foster-to-College Scholarship	$7,500,000	$7,500,000
D	TOTAL DPF	Dedicated Purpose Fund Group	$7,500,000	$7,500,000
E	TOTAL ALL BUDGET FUND GROUPS		$7,500,000	$7,500,000

FOSTER-TO-COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

The foregoing appropriation item 235689, Foster-to-College Scholarship, shall be used by the Chancellor of Higher Education to support the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program pursuant to section 3333.89 of the Revised Code.

Of the foregoing appropriation item 235689, Foster-to-College Scholarship, a portion in each fiscal year may be allocated to the same organization engaged by the Department of Job and Family Services to administer the Chafee ETV Program to employ four full-time foster care student navigators pursuant to division (E) of section 3333.89 of the Revised Code.

An amount equal to the unexpended, unencumbered balance of the foregoing appropriation item 235689, Foster-to-College Scholarship, at the end of fiscal year 2026 is hereby reappropriated for the same purpose in fiscal year 2027.

Section 4. Within the limits set forth in this act, the Director of Budget and Management shall establish accounts indicating the source and amount of funds for each appropriation made in this act, and shall determine the manner in which appropriation accounts shall be maintained. Expenditures from operating appropriations contained in this act shall be accounted for as though made in, and are subject to all applicable provisions of, the main operating appropriations act of the 136th General Assembly.

Section 5. On July 1, 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter, the Director of Budget and Management shall transfer $15,000,000 cash from the General Revenue Fund to the Foster-to-College Scholarship Fund (Fund 5AM1), which is hereby created in the state treasury.