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H.B. 164
135th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors Reps. Jarrells and Seitz

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SUMMARY

- Requires the Department of Education to hire a full-time school foster care liaison to work with public children services agencies, private child placing agencies, and the Department of Job and Family Services to facilitate services to foster children related to school placement.
- Establishes the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program to award qualifying students scholarships based on a federal need analysis.
- Requires the Chancellor of Higher Education to facilitate the employment of 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.
- Makes an appropriation.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

School foster care liaison

Subject to availability of funds, the bill requires the Department of Education to hire a full-time school foster care liaison to work with public children services agencies (PCSA), private child placing agencies (PCPA), and the Department of Job and Family Services. The role of the school foster care liaison is to facilitate services to keep students placed in foster care in the student's school of origin or if in a student's best interest to relocate, facilitate the prompt and appropriate placement, transfer, and enrollment of the student in another public school.¹

¹ R.C. 3301.95(B).

Under the bill, the school foster care liaison's specific duties include:

1. Responding to a request from a PCSA or PCPA 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 PCSA or PCPA 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 PCSA or PCPA 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 by the bill.²

Foster-to-college Scholarship Program

The bill also establishes the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program, under which, beginning in the 2023-2024 academic year, a foster-to-college scholarship will be awarded to each qualifying student based on the student's federal need analysis.³ A "qualifying student" means an Ohio resident who has been accepted at an institution of higher education who, at any time on or after the student's 13th birthday, has been placed in foster care or noncertified kinship care. In the latter case, the student must have also been adjudicated an abused, neglected, or dependent child.⁴

The bill requires that the scholarship be paid directly to the participating institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled. The bill also requires the Chancellor of Higher Education to adopt rules necessary to administer this section, and exempts that rulemaking

² R.C. 3301.95(B)(1) to (6).

³ R.C. 3333.89(B)(1).

⁴ R.C. 3333.89(A)(6).

from the provisions of [S.B. 9 of the 134th General Assembly](#), available on the General Assembly's website, legislature.ohio.gov.

Scholarship amount

The amount of the foster-to-college scholarship is the recognized cost of attendance after deducting all of the following:

1. The student aid index as calculated by the federal need analysis;
2. The amount of any federal Pell grant award for which the applicant is eligible;
3. The amount of any state grant;
4. The federal supplemental educational opportunity grant;
5. The Ohio college opportunity grant;
6. The amount of any other state and federal gift aid;
7. The Chafee ETV grant;
8. Any extended foster care benefits;
9. 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;
10. For public institutions, the sum of all institutional grants, scholarships, tuition waivers, and tuition remission amounts.⁵

Conditions for receipt of scholarship

The bill requires each qualifying student to do all of the following to receive a scholarship:

1. Complete the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA), including acknowledgement of past or current foster care placement;
2. If eligible, complete the application for a federal 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 R.C. 3333.89(B)(1)(a) to (j).

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.⁶

Private institutions

The bill makes participation optional for private institutions of higher education. To opt out, the institution must provide notice to the Chancellor of Higher Education by September 1 for the next academic year. The bill requires an eligible private institution that chooses to participate and accepts a student's application to attend the institution to 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 amounts described in "**Amount of scholarship**" above.⁷

Application and award procedures

Students must apply to participate in the program in a form and manner prescribed by the Chancellor. The Chancellor must approve an application for 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 must approve applications in the order in which they are received. The amount of scholarships awarded must not exceed the amount appropriated for that purpose.⁸

Foster care student navigators

The bill requires the Chancellor to enter into an agreement with the same organization engaged by the Department of Job and Family Services to administer the federal Chafee ETV program to employ four full-time employees to serve as foster care student navigators. The student navigators must:

1. Assist prospective qualifying students in applying for and enrolling in institutions of higher education and the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program;
2. Work with school districts and school foster care liaisons to identify prospective qualifying students;
3. Provide guidance to prospective qualifying students with selecting institutions and programs in which the student may wish to enroll;

⁶ R.C. 3333.89(C).

⁷ R.C. 3333.89(B)(3) and (4).

⁸ R.C. 3333.89(D)(1).

4. 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.⁹

Appropriation

The bill appropriates \$7.5 million in both FY 2024 and 2025 to the Department of Higher Education for the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program.

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	05-01-23

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⁹ R.C. 3333.89(E).