



Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act of 2024

Sponsored by Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Mike Braun (R-IN), and Representatives Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA) and Erin Houchin (R-IN)

For many working families, higher education can be a ticket to the middle class. Unfortunately, homeless and foster youth face unique and significant barriers to accessing and succeeding in higher education. In U.S. public schools, more than 1.2 million students are homeless, and last year, the number of families staying in homeless shelters and those who were visibly unsheltered increased by 16%. Furthermore, far too few of these students can enroll in or afford the rising costs of college, let alone graduate. Homeless and foster youth often lack the support network to help them navigate a complicated higher education and financial aid system.

The bipartisan *FAFSA Simplification Act* made many critical improvements to the financial aid process for homeless and foster youth, which were first suggested by previous versions of this legislation. The **Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act of 2024** further removes barriers in college for homeless and foster youth and ensures they have clear and reliable pathways into and through higher education. The bill would:

- Require institutions of higher education to develop a plan to assist and give priority to homeless and foster youth for any on-campus housing during and between academic terms
- Designate liaisons at each institution of higher education to assist homeless and foster youth in accessing student support services and community resources
- Provide accessible information on college websites about the financial aid process and resources available to homeless and foster youth
- Require colleges to include voluntary questions on admissions applications about students' status as homeless and foster youth in order to facilitate support services and provide outcome data
- Prioritize homeless and foster youth in Federal Work-Study positions
- Create an 'ombudsman' in the U.S. Department of Education to intervene in cases where a homeless or foster youth's determination process is disputed by the institution
- Provide homeless and foster youth in-state tuition rates to reduce barriers to college attendance due to lack of financial support, particularly when they haven't had stable residency
- Facilitate the recruitment, participation, and retention of homeless and foster youth in the TRIO and GEAR UP college access programs
- Include homeless and foster youth in the data collected by college access programs
- Require federal professional development and guidance to financial aid administrators and other personnel on best practices to support homeless and foster youth