



# AB 2489 (Leno): HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ALL CALIFORNIA FOSTER YOUTH

## THE GOAL

All California foster youth should receive the academic preparation, financial assistance and the campus-based support services they need to access and succeed in higher education.

## THE PROBLEM

- California protects foster youth from abuse and neglect, but needs to do more to support foster youth's transition to successful adulthood. In today's society, a college degree is almost a necessity to becoming economically self-sufficient. Yet very few foster youth are able to continue their education after high school, and those that do often encounter significant obstacles that hinder their ability to succeed.<sup>1</sup>
- Half of all foster youth do not complete high school<sup>2</sup>, and only 15% take the necessary courses to gain college admission<sup>3</sup>. Foster youth face barriers receiving the necessary academic preparation for college and obtaining the information necessary to complete the application and financial aid process. Not surprisingly, fewer than 10% of foster youth who graduate go on to college.<sup>4</sup>
- If foster youth do manage to overcome existing challenges and enter college, they still struggle to find the financial assistance to fund their living and education expenses and to receive the support on campus to successfully graduate from college. As a result, fewer than 2% of foster youth who go on to college ever graduate. The consequences for foster youth of not completing a postsecondary education are severe.
- Without a college degree as a safety net, former foster youth are more likely than the general population to face such challenges as homelessness, incarceration, and lower lifetime earning potential.

## SUPPORT AB 2489: Higher Education Access and Support for Foster Youth

The majority of foster youth- 70%- have the desire to attend college, but need California's support to reach this goal. AB 2489 includes a widely agreed on package of higher education preparation, funding and retention supports necessary for foster youth to successfully access and succeed in college. These reforms will ensure that foster youth have the same opportunity all other California students have to become productive, contributing adults. AB 2489 includes the following components:

### Preparation

- Expansion of the California Department of Education's Foster Youth Services to All Foster Youth

### Financial Assistance

- Tuition Waivers at Public Colleges and Universities
- Automatic Eligibility for Cal-Grants
- State Complement to Federal Chafee Grant Program
- Timely Distribution of Chafee Grants

### Support Services

- Housing Preferences on all Public College and University Campuses
- Campus Incentives to Replicate the Guardian Scholars Program

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<sup>1</sup> See Wolanin, Tom. Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policy Makers. Institute for Higher Education Policy. (2005) Available at: <http://www.ihep.org/Pubs/PDF/fosteryouth.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ronna J. Cook, Are We Helping Foster Youth Prepare for Their Future?, 16 Child & Youth Services Rev. 213 (1994)

<sup>3</sup> Blome, Wendy W. What Happens to Foster Kids: Educational Experiences of a Random Sample of Foster Care Youth and a Matched Group of Nonfoster Care Youth. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal 14:41-53. (1997)

<sup>4</sup> Emerson, J. & Lovitt T. Encouraging News for College Bound Foster Youth. (2004)