

DATE: January 15, 2020

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs

FROM: Samantha Warren, University of Maine System Director of Government & Community Relations, on behalf of the Public Higher Education Systems Coordinating Committee

RE: **Chapter 56, Resolve To Determine Ways To Increase the Number of Recipients under the Tuition Waiver Program for Participants in Foster Care (LD 1566)**

There are currently 2,356 Mainers of traditional college-going age (18-25) who are in foster care or have been adopted through the State's foster care system or were/are in permanency guardianships. Yet just 3 percent of these individuals are currently benefiting from the program that allows them to attend Maine's public universities, community colleges or maritime academy without having to pay for tuition. That's because under current State statute, only 30 new tuition waivers are granted each year.

In response to the increasing number of young Mainers in State custody and the growing gap between the limited number of available waivers and the interest among foster and adopted children/wards to pursue postsecondary education, in 2019 Sen. Russell Black submitted *LD 1566, An Act To Increase the Number of Recipients Under the Tuition Waiver Program for Participants in Foster Care*, which sought to double from 30 to 60 the number of new waivers granted each year. Because of the fiscal impact to the University of Maine System (UMS) and Maine Community College System (MCCS) and concerns that the proposed increase in waivers might still not address the extent of the need, the 129th Legislature asked the Public Higher Education Systems Coordinating Committee (HECC) to review and report back on the barriers to utilization of the 30-year-old tuition waiver program (Resolve 2019, Chapter 56). The UMS, which currently enrolls nearly three-quarters of waiver recipients, led this study on behalf of the HECC.

The findings detailed on the pages that follow make clear the transformative power of this waiver and of access to affordable, quality postsecondary education in Maine for those who have been in State care. This report also brings in to sharp focus that the current number of waivers is increasingly not meeting demand, especially as the number of youth in State care climbs and more Mainers understand the importance of obtaining a postsecondary degree or credential to getting a good-paying job that allows them to be financially independent. **Beyond needed State investment to expand the waiver program to increase college attainment, workforce readiness and self-sufficiency for these underserved students, investments in targeted services and supports are also needed to foster improved outcomes.** In the meantime, the organizations that work with this vulnerable population and/or the waiver program have

made several changes to its administration to better align with other deadlines in the college admissions process and to ensure applicants who do not receive the waiver due to availability are connected to other financial aid resources that improve their likelihood of attendance.

FOSTER CARE TUITION WAIVER PROGRAM HISTORY

In 1999, then Rep. Michael Brennan presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs *LD 708, An Act to Provide Educational Opportunities for Persons Who Resided in Foster Care as Children*. The bill proposed to provide tuition waivers to attend Maine's public postsecondary institutions to any person 17 or 18 years of age who resided in a foster family home for at least one year. Ultimately, the enacted law (PL 1999, Chapter 216) limited the number of waivers to 25 and required the waiver recipient be in foster care at the time of graduation and have unmet needs remaining after all other financial resources including loans, grants and other State and federal funds were considered. The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) was designated to administer the waiver program but has never been appropriated funds to do so.

The following year, the law was clarified to remove the unmet need provisions of the bill and make clear that 25 new foster children would be eligible for a tuition waiver in each year (PL 1999, Chapter 774). Also enacted was the expectation that still stands today that Maine's public postsecondary educational institutions must absorb the reduction in tuition revenues that results from providing a tuition waiver and may not request additional General Fund appropriations from the Legislature to offset the revenue loss.

In 2003, the number of new waivers granted each year was expanded to 30 (PL 2003, Chapter 187), though the original legislative proposal that year (LD 326) was 35. In 2005, those who had been adopted through the State's foster care system or are a ward of a permanency guardian also became eligible for the waiver (PL 2005, Chapter 471).

CURRENT WAIVER APPLICATION PROCESS & USAGE

On Feb. 1 of each year, FAME places the application for the foster care tuition waiver program on its website, thus opening the application admissions period. In addition to the completed program application, those seeking the waiver must provide proof of acceptance or enrollment in an undergraduate degree program at an eligible institution and have filed their FAFSA. FAME verifies eligibility with the Maine Department of Health and Human Service (DHHS) upon receipt of an application.

The first 30 completed applications submitted by mail by eligible applicants are offered the waiver, which is renewable for up to five years or the equivalent prior to the receipt of a baccalaureate degree. It is important to note that if a student does not have a letter of acceptance and/or has not filed their FAFSA, their application is deemed incomplete and thus not considered until all requirements are met. Those who apply for the award

but are not among the first-come, first-served are notified via mail by FAME that they have been put on a waiting list and encouraged to apply again in a future year.

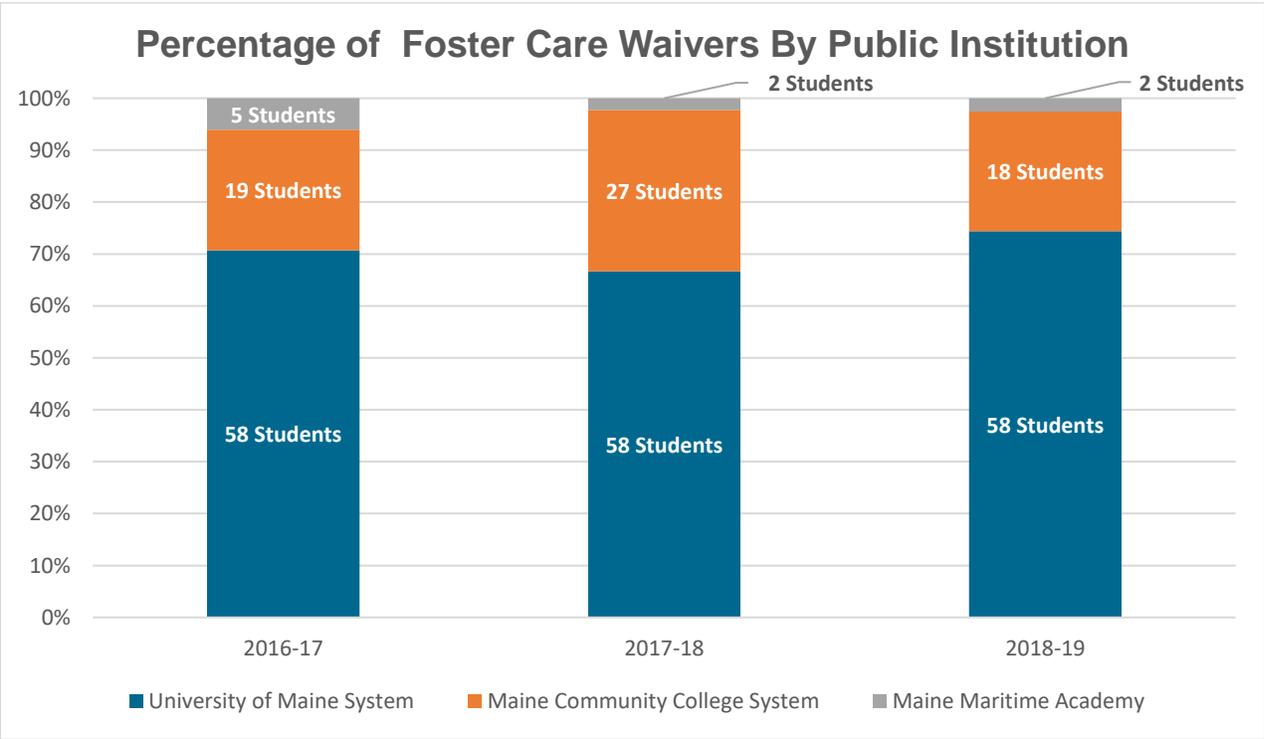
While there is no application deadline, because there are a limited number of waivers, FAME removes the application from its website as soon as it receives more than it can award. As a result, it is impossible to gauge the extent of the interest and need that exists for this tuition waiver. However, in just the handful of days between when it is posted and removed, FAME has received an average of 62 applications over the last three years, though a handful are incomplete or from students later determined to be ineligible.

Demographics of Recent New Waiver Recipients

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
ELIGIBILITY REASON			
IN FOSTER CARE	7	5	4
ADOPTED	20	23	25
PERM. GUARDIANSHIP	3	1	1
UNKNOWN	N/A	1	N/A
AGE AT INITIAL AWARD			
17	15	10	9
18	12	11	13
19	2	4	6
20	N/A	2	1
21	N/A	N/A	N/A
22	N/A	N/A	N/A
23	1	N/A	N/A
24	N/A	N/A	N/A
25	N/A	1	N/A
Other	N/A	2	1

GENDER	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
FEMALE	20	16	20
MALE	10	14	10

The UMS has historically enrolled the majority of tuition waiver recipients. For the most recent academic year for which data is available (2017-18), the amount waived was \$358,722. More than one-third (\$147,576) was waived by the University of Maine, with the University of Maine at Farmington waiving \$71,740 that year and the University of Southern Maine waiving \$49,322. The remainder was divided relatively equally among the four other small System campuses. Meanwhile, the MCCS which historically has served between one-third and one-quarter of recipients, waived approximately \$80,000 in 2018-19.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE WAIVER BARRIERS

In seeking to better understand the program and develop recommendations for improvement, the UMS convened multiple meetings between July 2019 and January 2020 with relevant stakeholders, including FAME, JMG (formerly Jobs for Maine’s Graduates), Maine DHHS, including the Office of Child and Family Services and Office

for Family Independence, MCCS and foster families. Key findings from those conversations include:

◇ **Maine’s tuition waiver program is critical to raising college aspirations and attainment among a population of high-need students who would otherwise be less likely to consider and pursue postsecondary education and the opportunities it creates for them to realize a more stable, fulfilling, independent future.**

According to 2014 data from the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 84 percent of foster youth ages 17 and 18 want to go to college but only 20 percent who graduate from high school will actually do so and the majority will never earn their four-year degree.

Maine is one of 20 or so states with a tuition waiver program for this population (please see attached policy brief from Education Commission of the States). Another 10 or so states offer scholarships and grants, including the State of Washington which provides a scholarship of up to \$4,500 annually to help those who have experienced foster care or unaccompanied homelessness with college costs, and also provides priority consideration for that state’s grant and work study programs. These State-supported aid programs are an important complement to federal resources including those that may extend placement and related benefits (e.g. MaineCare) for those older than 18 if they are pursuing postsecondary education. Six states offer benefits beyond tuition and required fees, including the All Iowa Opportunity Foster Care Grant, which may cover room, board, books and supplies, transportation and other personal living expenses.

“I looked forward to college and my successful future and that was what got me through all my dark days in my last months of foster care. The tuition waiver gave me a chance to go get my dreams...It breaks my heart to know that some who have aged out of the foster care system don’t have the same opportunity because there are only so many waivers.”

- Foster Care Tuition Waiver Recipient
Attending Kennebec Valley Community College
(Testimony on LD 1566)

◇ **The demand far exceeds the availability of tuition waivers**, though it is impossible to determine by how much given the limited application window.

◇ **Youth in foster care as well as families who have adopted/entered permanency guardianship through Maine’s foster care program may have an expectation that the tuition waiver is guaranteed.** During testimony on LD 1566, a former school superintendent who had adopted three relatives said, “When they were adopted it was understood that there was a tuition waiver program that would help pay for their college costs. I was surprised when my niece did not get the tuition waiver. Education is a route to breaking the cycle of abuse and often poverty. I am shocked that the State of Maine randomly divides these children into those who get help and encouragement, and those who don’t.” While the waiver may have historically been available to all applicants, in

recent years the program has been a victim of its own success, as it has provided hope and opportunity to more foster and adopted youth and thus generated increased demand for the benefit.

◇ **Expanding the number of tuition waivers without additive State funding would be burdensome to Maine’s public postsecondary institutions**, which already write-off approximately \$450,000 annually to support the current recipients.

Given this, the Legislature may want to consider appropriating State funding to support the program. There was agreement among stakeholders that ideally, the tuition waiver would be available to any foster or adopted youth who aspired to attend college in Maine and who applied during an extended application period and met eligibility requirements. This would provide certainty at a critical time of transition to a population that has experienced incredible instability, leading to improved educational and workforce outcomes that benefit the individual, our communities and the state’s economy.

Stakeholders also agreed that benefits should not differ between foster youth and those who have been adopted/entered permanency guardianship as that may be a disincentive to families to provide legal permanence to children and youth in Maine’s foster care. Additionally, it is widely understood that any youth who has been taken into Maine DHHS custody has faced significant childhood trauma, and, as a result typically face higher developmental and learning barriers that necessitate strong supports to successfully transition into adulthood. There is an assumption that because those who have been adopted/entered permanency guardianship have greater supports than those who remain in care, they are more likely to know about the waiver program and have help in submitting the application in a timely manner. However, while in 2018-19 those who had been adopted received six times the number of waivers than those who were still in State care, the number of those who have been adopted between the ages of 18-25 is 14 times the number of current foster youth in that same age range.

Maine DHHS representatives were of the opinion that there should continue to be no earnings limits for waiver recipients and their adoptive families as the Department has been able to promote the waiver to potential adoptive and permanency guardians as an incentive to permanency. This is especially important given the number of children in Maine awaiting placement. According to recently released data, foster children here are in State care for an average of 21 months, the third-longest duration in the nation. Furthermore, for families who provide legal permanence for older children, they may not have a meaningful amount of time to save for college regardless of their income.

The fiscal impact of having universal waiver access is unknown. There are other states that have tuition waiver programs for foster youth that are not capped that could help inform the cost estimates, including Oklahoma and Texas, though there are nuances to eligibility in those programs. For example, Rhode Island’s Higher Education Opportunity

Incentive Grant Program is for those still in State custody and New Mexico's tuition waiver is for those transitioning out of State or Tribal custody.

Because foster youth are much less likely than their peers to graduate from high school and then go onto college, it is assumed that a minority of those eligible would actually apply. There are currently 2,356 Mainers between the ages of 18 and 25 who are in foster care (152) or who have been adopted or were minor wards of a permanency guardian (2,204). National data suggests that just 10 percent of foster youth attend college. If Maine did expand or make universal tuition waivers, it should likely impose upper-age limitations as it is currently one of just five states without this parameter. For example, Connecticut benefit recipients must start their subsidized academic program prior to their 21st birthday and remain eligible for assistance until the end of the school year in which he/she turns 23 years of age. Most recipients in Maine are 19 or younger when they first receive the waiver. As a result, age restrictions would not likely limit benefit access but would manage help the State's potential financial exposure.

State-Specific Foster Care Tuition Waiver Programs In New England:

Connecticut: State-funded subsidy for tuition, fees and room and board equivalent to the costs of Central CT State University (foster) or UConn (adopted), after other financial aid.

Massachusetts: Eligible students are entitled to a tuition and fee waiver equal to 100% resident tuition rate after other federal scholarships and grants. Cost paid by the State and not institution.

New Hampshire: New Hampshire provides a total of 30 new and renewal tuition and fee waivers that may be adjusted based on other aid each year, (15 for universities and 15 for community colleges).

Vermont: State-funded scholarship typically between \$1,000-\$2,000.

Stakeholders discussed at length whether an expanded tuition waiver should be a "last-dollar" scholarship that is limited to covering unmet need after all other financial aid is exhausted, as is done in some other states including New Jersey, North Carolina and Oregon. There was concern that this may force a student to have unrealistic added out-of-pocket costs for things like room, board and books that otherwise would have been covered by a program like Pell if it did not have to be applied against the cost of tuition. Furthermore, it was agreed that the simplicity of the one-stop tuition waiver as it is currently designed is important, especially to youth who may perceive the financial aid process as overwhelming and/or lack adult support to navigate these systems and otherwise may not consider college. One model worthwhile of further exploration is West Virginia, which provides last-dollar foster care tuition waivers that cover tuition and fees after other sources of financial aid dedicated solely to tuition and fees are exhausted.

Investments to lower the barriers for foster care pursuing and attaining post-secondary education must consider both enrollment and retention. Less than 3 percent of Maine youth in the foster care system successfully graduate from college.¹ Given that many youth who have been in foster care lag behind their peers in academic achievement given stress, trauma, high mobility, physical and developmental disabilities from abuse and neglect, fragmented services and supports, and many other impacts of adversity, any consideration of funding for postsecondary education must also consider investing in aligned supports. For example, when Nevada established its foster care tuition waiver program, it also created a foster youth ambassador, who coordinates with agencies and institutions and is a point of contact for students.

Maine's public colleges and universities have extensive navigational and other academic, financial, and social/emotional supports. However, foster and adopted youth would greatly benefit from trained adults who understand the distinctive challenges they face and the unique resources available to them including federal transition funds administered by Maine DHHS, among them the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) and Chaffee Foster Care Independent Program. Increasingly, JMG Specialists are those trusted tutors and mentors to Maine foster and adopted youth. Student-centered with a strong presence in Maine's middle, high and postsecondary schools, if adequately funded JMG is uniquely positioned to take on an expanded role supporting tuition waiver recipients to start, stay and complete college and transition to the workforce and independence. In partnership with Maine DHHS, JMG now proactively enrolls any foster care youth who is attending a high school where there is a JMG program, and JMG Specialists play a significant role in supporting foster care youth in post-secondary planning.

While FAME does not receive any funding to administer the waiver, if the program was expanded beyond 30 waivers, administrative costs should also be appropriately subsidized by the State.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

With the understanding that Legislative changes to the program would take time, the UMS, FAME, JMG and DHHS have worked to determine process improvements that would better serve applicants in the meantime.

The first change students will notice in 2020 is that the application period will open on March 1, instead of Feb. 1. Because a completed application requires a college

¹ Burt S. Barnow, Amy Buck, Kirk O'Brien, Peter Pecora, Mei Ling Ellis, and Eric Steiner, "Effective Services for Improving Education and Employment Outcomes For Children And Alumni Of Foster Care Service: Correlates and Educational and Employment Outcomes," *Child & Family Social Work* (2013): 159.

acceptance letter – which many Maine students may not have by Feb. 1 unless they applied to college early decision – and the FAFSA to be submitted – which many Maine students may not have not done by Feb. 1 – there was a concern that the applicant pool may not be representative of the entire eligible student population.

While there was concern that moving the application availability later would result in an increase in submissions that would have to be denied because of the waiver cap, ultimately it was agreed that the benefits of moving the application period later justified the change, especially because it better aligns with the March 1 priority FAFSA filling date that many Maine colleges and universities use. The Youth Transition Program Manager at Maine DHHS who verifies eligibility has committed to accelerating that Department's process to ensure successful applicants are still notified by mid-April as was past practice.

Secondly, based on feedback shared during the public hearing on LD 1566 and in the conversations with students and families that followed, it was determined that more could be done to positively communicate with and support those who had been unsuccessful in receiving the waiver due to its limited availability. Many of these students may be eligible for numerous other institutional, State and federal financial aid resources that would allow them to access quality public postsecondary education in Maine for little or even no cost. For example, as part of \$92 million in institutional aid it is making directly available to its students in the current academic year, the UMS has a promise program at four of its campuses that allows Pell-eligible students to pay no out-of-pocket tuition or fees.

Starting this year, the letter that applicants receive letting them know they have not been granted the waiver will make clear that there are other financial resources available to them and let them know of the specific individual at FAME or JMG who will be directly reaching out to assist them in finding and securing other aid. JMG specialists will contact those individuals with whom they have a prior relationship while a regional FAME college access counselor will contact those without an established JMG connection. We believe this will send these students an important, positive message that college is accessible to them and that there are knowledgeable, caring adults who are committed to their success, thus increasing their likelihood of college attendance and completion.

Maine is currently experiencing a significant increase in the number of youth in State care, due in part to the opioid epidemic. At the same time, it is also promoting policies that increase postsecondary degree and credential attainment to help more Maine adults attain a credential of value (60 percent by 2025 goal). As a result, this is an

opportune time to consider meaningful expansion of this in-demand benefit that has greatly improved college-going among foster and adopted youth over the last three decades. The new 10-year State economic plan has among its strategies increasing the labor force participation of existing residents, especially young people disengaged from school and work. The UMS and MCCS as well as our partners at FAME, JMG and Maine DHHS stand ready to work together with the Legislature to expand and enhance financial and other resources that foster college access, persistence and degree/credential attainment, fulfillment and independence among the Maine students who most need our support.



50-STATE REVIEW

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Tuition Assistance Programs for Foster Youth Pursuing Postsecondary Education

EMILY PARKER AND MOLLY SARUBBI

Many students have concerns about the affordability of college, which may interfere with their potential success. However, foster care alumni have unique needs when making the transition into postsecondary enrollment. Compared to completion rates

graduation rates than their non-foster peers – 46 percent compared to 82.3 percent.³ As a result of these perpetual educational inequities, it is important to consider policies aimed at addressing disparate postsecondary access and attainment rates.

TWENTY-EIGHT STATES OFFER SOME TYPE OF STATE-LEVEL TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH SEEKING A POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL. TWENTY STATES UTILIZE TUITION WAIVERS AND EIGHT STATES OFFER GRANTS OR SCHOLARSHIPS.

for the general population, postsecondary education outcomes for youth with foster care experience lag behind.¹ Nearly 60 percent of the general population will obtain a bachelor's degree, compared with only 3 percent of foster care alumni.² Similarly, foster care alumni have lower high school

A 2016 Education Commission of the States special report, **Strengthening Policies for Foster Youth Postsecondary Attainment**, reviews how state policies can increase higher education access for foster youth and highlights states' autonomy to develop initiatives to best support this population. In an effort to provide ongoing support for state policymakers and education leaders, this 50-State Review expands on the mentioned report to focus specifically on state-based tuition assistance programs for foster youth. This comparison of various state tuition assistance programs can serve as a tool to better understand the supports for this vulnerable student population and provide a guidepost for possible policy redesign.

Of the 28 states with tuition assistance programs, **all but five** states – Maine, Michigan, New York, Virginia and West Virginia – **include an upper-age limit** in the **eligibility requirements** for state-level tuition assistance programs for former foster youth.

Six states provide **financial assistance** beyond **tuition** and **mandatory fees**. This additional support can include books, supplies, room and board, and transportation expenses.

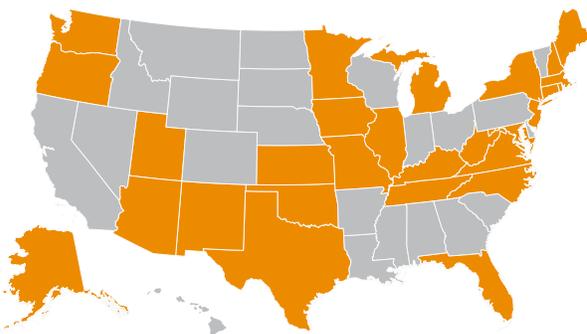
Overview of Tuition Assistance Programs

State-based tuition assistance programs are not the only policies in place to help foster youth attain a postsecondary credential. Additional federal, state and institution-level policies exist that intentionally target foster youth.

State-based tuition assistance programs act as a form of **stability aid**, creating an **additional layer** of financial support not always met by larger national funding streams.

This support can be integral in the postsecondary access and persistence for underrepresented student populations. In 2003, tuition assistance programs geared specifically for foster youth began to appear, however, a recent scan of the national legislature confirms that to date, 28 states have some form of tuition assistance for foster youth.

The most common policy design is for states or institutions to award a tuition waiver to former foster youth. There are 20 state-level tuition waivers for former foster youth and eight grants or scholarships. The map below indicates which states have state-level tuition assistance programs.



Eligibility Criteria

Although no two tuition assistance programs are identical across states, some common requirements exist. For example, students must submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), maintain satisfactory

academic performance to be eligible for and to maintain the award, and use the tuition assistance at a public community college or four-year institution. However, when digging into the specific eligibility requirements of each program, the details often vary significantly from state to state.

Eligibility requirements for tuition assistance programs vary in a number of ways including upper-age limits for program participation, the age or amount of time when the student was in foster care, what the tuition assistance includes and/or covers, and limitations on the amount of funding or the number of awards. Additionally, some programs further constrict student eligibility through more stringent criteria, such as personal financial requirements or additional forms or scholarship applications.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

COMMON REQUIREMENTS



Submit the FAFSA



Use tuition assistance at an eligible institution



Maintain satisfactory academic performance

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Age limits for program participation
- Amount of time student was in foster care
- What the tuition includes/covers
- Amount of funding/number of awards
- Personal financial requirements
- Additional scholarship applications



The following state examples show the range of support that state-level tuition assistance can provide.

Oregon

The **Oregon** tuition waiver for foster youth and former foster youth covers tuition and required fees remaining after funds from the Pell Grant, the Oregon Opportunity Grant and other institutional aid have been applied at any Oregon public institution. Students must have spent at least six months in the foster care system between the ages of 14 and 21 to meet eligibility requirements. The Oregon program, in addition to the academic and financial requirements, also requires recipients to perform 30 hours of community service each academic year.⁴ These stringent requirements to access the Oregon tuition waiver result in very few students actually applying for and receiving the tuition waiver. Because Oregon has other, less rigorous financial aid programs, such as the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the remaining costs at a public institution may not justify the community service requirement. When designing tuition assistance programs for foster youth, states should consider the whole financial aid landscape in their state to best identify unmet need and not duplicate efforts.

Connecticut

Connecticut has two separate programs for former foster youth – one for students adopted from foster care and one for students in foster care on their 18th birthday. The combination of these two programs cover much of the foster care spectrum, but exclude students who were in foster care, but were reunited with their birth family prior to their 18th birthday. However, the tuition assistance program for students in foster care on their 18th birthday (and not adopted or reunited with their birth family) has an application requirement that can be restrictive to

foster youth. According to state policy, applicants must “exhibit adequate social skills and demonstrate appropriate behavior, as assessed by the adolescent Social Worker and the case history.”⁵

Iowa

The **Iowa** tuition assistance program differs from that of Oregon and Connecticut because it is a grant and not a tuition waiver, and allows the state to cover the full cost of attendance, not just tuition and required fees. While most tuition assistance programs cover only tuition and mandatory fees, the All Iowa Opportunity Foster Care Grant is an example of one of the six states nationally that provide support beyond the cost of tuition and mandatory fees. Iowa covers the cost of tuition, fees, books and supplies, dorms and off-campus housing, meal plans, transportation and personal living expenses. This program provides a generous benefit to students, eliminating many of the financial barriers that foster youth face when seeking a postsecondary credential. In order to apply, students must submit both the FAFSA and the Iowa Financial Aid Application.

Tuition Assistance Programs by State

The following chart lists each of the 28 states with state-level tuition assistance programs for foster youth. It also details the age by which students must take advantage of the tuition assistance program, the requirement for the duration of their time in care, the financial support provided by the program, the number of credit hours required to qualify for the tuition assistance, and additional details about the program. [This interactive data visualization](#) provides an in-depth look at the tuition assistance programs and the number of youth in care.



Tuition Assistance Programs by State

State	Name of Program	Age Limit	Foster Care Requirement	Financial Support	Enrollment Requirement	Additional Notes
Alaska	University of Alaska Presidential Foster Youth Tuition Waiver CCS HB 302	21	In care after 16th birthday	Tuition		Must apply for two additional scholarships Capped at 20 scholarships per year
Arizona	Arizona Tuition Waiver for those formerly in foster care § 15-1809	23	In care after 16th birthday	Tuition and mandatory fees		5-year pilot program started in 2015 Total personal assets must be less than \$10,000
Connecticut	College Assistance/ Postsecondary Education Assistance for Adopted Children Tuition Waiver Policy Manual: Post Adoption Services Chapter 48-20-2	Apply by 21, receive funding until 23	Adopted before 18th birthday and after Dec. 31, 2004	Tuition, fees, and room and board equivalent to the cost of tuition, fees, and room and board at the University of Connecticut Storrs Campus		\$500 personal contribution per year
	Post-Secondary Education Program Tuition Waiver Policy 42-20-20	23 Must enroll immediately following high school completion	In care on 18th birthday	Tuition, fees, room and board (on campus), and/or off campus stipend, books, equipment, supplies and materials	Full-time only	Must “exhibit adequate social skills and demonstrate appropriate behavior, as assessed by the adolescent Social Worker”
Florida	Tuition and Fee Exemption Tuition Waiver West’s F.S.A. § 1009.25	28	Under 18 and in care, over 18 and in care on 18th birthday, spent six months in care after 16, or adopted after May 5, 1997	Tuition and fees	Full-time only	Capped at 54 FTE students or 1 percent of the institution’s total FTE enrollment, whichever is greater, at each institution
Illinois	Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Scholarship Program 89 Ill. Adm. Code 312.100	23	Currently in care, aged out of care at 18, in care immediately before being adopted or in the KinGap program	Tuition and fees	12-credit hour minimum	Maximum of 48 scholarships each year, four of which are awarded to children of veterans
Iowa	All Iowa Opportunity Foster Care Grant I.C.A. § 261.6	Enrolled by 23, receive funding until 24	Aged out at 18, but in care at 18 or legally adopted after 16	Tuition, fees, books and supplies, dorms or off-campus housing, meal plans, transportation and personal living expenses	Full-time or Part-time Prorated to reflect the number of hours	Grant amounts up to \$9,010 per year Must submit Iowa Financial Aid Application



State	Name of Program	Age Limit	Foster Care Requirement	Financial Support	Enrollment Requirement	Additional Notes
Kansas	Kansas Foster Child Educational Assistance Tuition Waiver Program Kansas 2016 statute 75-53,112	23	In care on 18th birthday, graduated high school while in care, adopted after 16th birthday, left care after 16th birthday	Tuition, fees, option for additional expenses if funding allows		
Kentucky	Kentucky Foster or Adopted Children Tuition Waiver Program KRS § 164.2847	Must enroll up to four years after high school graduation	Currently in care, in care at 18, adopted from state foster care (adopted by a family who receives state adoption assistance or participating in a state-funded independent living program)	Tuition and mandatory fees	Full-time or Part-time	
Maine	Post-Secondary Education Tuition Waiver 20-A M.R.S.A. § 12572	No age limit	In care or adopted from care at time of high school graduation	Tuition only	Full-time only	Submit an application form to the Finance Authority of Maine Capped at 30 new students per year
Maryland	Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients §15-106.	Enroll by 25	In care on 18th birthday, in care on 13th birthday and placed into guardianship, adopted after 13th birthday, or be the younger sibling of a student who fits qualification 1 or 2.	Tuition and mandatory fees	Full-time or Part-time	
Massachusetts	Department of Children and Families Adopted Child Tuition Waiver and Fee Assistance Program	24	Adopted by an eligible Massachusetts state employee or by an eligible Massachusetts resident through the DCF	Tuition and fees	Full-time or Part-time	
	DCF Foster Child Tuition Waiver and Fee Assistance Program	24	In care at least six months before 18, not have been adopted or returned home	Tuition and fees		
Michigan	Fostering Futures Scholarship M.C.L.A. 722.1021 through 722.1031	No age limit	In care on or after 13th birthday	Tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies and equipment	Full-time or Part-time	
Minnesota	MNSCU Tuition Waiver for Persons Under the Guardianship of the Commissioner of Human Services Procedure 5.12.2 Tuition Waivers, Deferrals, and Retroactive Drops	21	Currently under the guardianship of the commissioner of human services	Tuition		Decentralized. Up to the president of each college or university Must contribute toward their expenses by gainful employment if able to work



State	Name of Program	Age Limit	Foster Care Requirement	Financial Support	Enrollment Requirement	Additional Notes
Missouri	Missouri Reach Tuition Waiver V.A.M.S. 173.270.1	Must apply by the third anniversary of discharge date, graduated high school, obtained GED or 21st birthday	In care before 18th birthday or when -graduated high school	Tuition and fees		Students must apply to the coordinating board for higher education for a determination of eligibility 100 hrs of community service/internship each year of award
New Hampshire	Tuition Waiver for Children in State Foster Care or Guardianship § 187-A:20-b	Less than 23	In care for the immediate six-month period prior to 18th birthday, in care at the time of 18th birthday, adopted while in care or in an out-of-home placement at time of 17th birthday	Tuition only NH offers additional room/board scholarship independent of tuition waiver	Full-time only 12 credit minimum	Capped at 10 tuition waivers for the NH University System and 10 waivers for the Community College System
New Jersey	New Jersey Foster Care (NJFC) Scholars Program	16-23 years	In care nine months before 16, living in transitional housing	Tuition and fees only	Full-time only	
New Mexico	Foster child tuition and fee waiver eligibility; notification N. M. S. A. 1978, § 21-1-4.7	25	In care (including legal custody of NM Indian nation) between 14-1, or when graduated high school /obtained GED	Tuition and limited fees only		
New York	Foster Youth College Success Initiative McKinney's Education Law § 6456	No upper-age limit	In care by 18, any time after 13th birthday	Tuition, fees, books, transportation, housing, summer college prep, including advising, tutoring and academic assistance		
North Carolina	North Carolina Foster Youth Tuition Waiver N.C.G.S.A. § 115B-2	24	Ward of the state by 18 and eligible for North Carolina Education and Training Voucher	Tuition		
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Successful Adulthood (OKSA) program 340:75-6-110	26 Must apply within three years of high school graduation	In care at least nine months between ages 16-18	Tuition only		
Oregon	Free College Tuition for Former Foster Youth ORS 350.300	25	Spent six months in foster care between ages 14-21, enroll in program within three years of leaving care or graduating high school, whichever comes first	Tuition and fees only		30 hours of community service each academic year



State	Name of Program	Age Limit	Foster Care Requirement	Financial Support	Enrollment Requirement	Additional Notes
Rhode Island	Higher Education Opportunity Grant RI § 42-72.8-2	Enroll by 21, receive funding through 23	In care before 18th birthday, for at least 24 months or in care between 16-18	Supplements federal, state and institutional scholarships, grants and loans	Full-time only	
Tennessee	Tennessee HOPE Foster Child Tuition Grant T. C. A. § 49-4-933	Four years after high school graduation, six years after admittance to an eligible institution	In care for at least one year after 14th birthday, adopted after 14 or was placed in permanent care after 14th birthday	Cost of attendance less other gift aid, not to exceed tuition and fees		
Texas	College Tuition and Fee Waiver V.T.C.A., Education Code § 54.367	25	In care between 14-18, adopted on or after Sept. 1, 2009, age 14 and reunified after June 1, 2016, in care and had dual enrollment in high school and higher education	Tuition and fees		
Utah	Tuition Waivers for Children in Long-Term Foster Care U.C.A. 1953 § 53B-8d-103	22	Aggregate time in care of at least 24 months	Tuition	Full-time or Part-time	
Virginia	Comprehensive community colleges (grants for tuition and fees for certain individuals) VA Code Ann. § 23.1-601	No age limit	In care at 18 and receive high school diploma	Tuition and fees	Full-time or Part-time Minimum six credits per semester	Community colleges only
Washington	Passport To College Tuition Waiver Program RCWA 28B.117.030	26	Aged out of system after 2007, spent one year in care after 16	Tuition and fees of highest-priced state institution and not surpass need	Full-time or Part-time	
West Virginia	West Virginia Tuition Waiver § 18B-10-7b	No age limit	In state care at least one year prior to waiver award	Tuition and fees	Full-time or Part-time Prorated based on number of hours	



Final Thoughts

Both federal and state-level policymakers have paid varying levels of attention to the broad issue of postsecondary degree attainment, and foster youth have benefited from federal and state policy development. While states have taken direct initiative in investing resources toward increasing the postsecondary degree attainment rate for foster youth, there is a lack of consistency across those levers of support. Complex and extensive eligibility criteria narrow the window of foster youth applicants and can limit the reach of well-intentioned policies.

Through a realignment of **broader and more inclusive program design**, state policymakers can have greater ability to **increase postsecondary pathways and attainment** for this important population.

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ENDNOTES

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