HOMELESSNESS & HIGHER EDUCATION: A NATIONAL POLICY DISCUSSION

Friday, October 4, 2019 | 9:00AM
EMBARK GEORGIA 2019, Columbus, GA
About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and technical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website: http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org
- Facebook Group
- Newsletter: https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up/
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships
Burdensome program rules can hinder the ability of homeless and foster youth to access federal supports.

Extensive documentation requests can impede access to aid for homeless youth.

Annual re-verification of homelessness poses barriers for unaccompanied homeless youth.

Limited academic preparation, family support, and awareness of resources make it harder for homeless and foster youth to pursue college.

Key findings of May 2016 report:
Pending Federal Legislation in the 116th Congress

- Higher Education Access and Success Act (S. 789, H.R. 1724)
- Fostering Success in Higher Education Act (S. 1650, H.R. 2966)
- Housing for Homeless Students Act (S. 767)
- Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 2001)
- Economic Mobility Act (H.R. 3300)
- FY2020 Appropriations
Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth (HEASHFY) S.789 /H.R. 1724

Removes barriers to higher education access and success caused by homelessness and foster care. Simplifies eligibility for federal financial aid (annual redeterminations, documentation). Improves access to housing, TRIO/GEAR-UP, other resources.

Sponsored by:
- U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) in the Senate
- U.S. Representatives Katherine Clark (D-5th/MA) and Don Young (R-At Large/AK) in the House of Representatives
An unaccompanied homeless youth’s status does not need to be re-determined each year.

Removing Barriers to Financial Aid: Verification and Eligibility

- Status determination is timely and rigorous
- Youth are asked to get information from previous years, which can be difficult.
- Youth can be denied eligibility if they are not able to get the verification requested.
New Provision

 Adds to the entities that can verify a youth’s status as homeless and unaccompanied, including TRIO, GEAR-UP and other homeless service providers.

Problem It Addresses

 Many of the providers youth were working with were not on the authorized list and their verification of youth’s homeless status was not accepted.

Removing Barriers to Financial Aid: Verification and Eligibility
New Provision

Designate a liaison for homeless and foster youth at all institutions of higher education to help youth access and complete higher education by ensuring that youth are connected to applicable and available student support services, programs, and community resources.

Removing Barriers to Financial Aid & Providing Supports to Students

Problem It Addresses

Homeless and foster youth often lack a support system to help them navigate college. Often campus staff do not have expertise in the needs of these populations to serve them most effectively.
New Provision

Provide priority for institutionally owned or operated housing, and require institutions of higher education to develop a plan for how youth can access housing resources during and between academic terms.

Problem It Addresses

Removing Barriers to Financial Aid & Providing Supports to Students

Lack of housing during and between school breaks is a major issue for homeless and foster youth and can cause youth to do poorly in school or drop out.
The Student Aid Improvement Act
S. 2557
*U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander  (R-TN)

Bundles 8 different bills together in a piecemeal, limited HEA reauthorization.

- FAFSA simplification - includes some homeless/foster measures (no annual redetermination for homeless youth; a, broader list of entities who can make determinations)
- Financial aid offer letters
- Pell grant changes
- Permanent mandatory funding for HBCUs and other minority serving institutions
The Fostering Success in Higher Education Act
S. 1650/H.R. 2966
*U.S. Representative Danny Davis (D-7th/IL) and Senator Bob Casey (D -PA)

Authorizes a new grant program in the Higher Education Act administered by the US Dept. of Ed. to provide:

$150 million a year in formula grants to states, tribes, and territories to:

- Establish or expand transitions between K-12 and higher education for foster and homeless youth, including summer bridge programs, through statewide initiatives;
- Develop “institutions of excellence” committed to serving foster and homeless youth from entrance to completion via robust support services and by covering the remaining cost of attendance beyond federal and state grant

www.schoolhouseconnection.org | @SchoolHouseConn
**New Provision**

Direct 25 percent of state grants to establish intensive, statewide transition initiatives to improve the college going culture and increase college enrollment by foster and homeless youth.

**Problem It Addresses**

Provides initiatives, such as summer bridge programs and working with McKinney-Vento liaisons, to successfully transition foster and homeless youth to college.

**Transition from K - 12**

New Provision

Dedicate 70 percent of state grants to develop Institutions of Excellence committed to serving foster and homeless youth via robust support services by providing:

- comprehensive wraparound services,
- hiring at least one full-time case manager
- Ensuring robust student health and mental services

Comprehensive Support Program


Problem It Addresses

Provides direct attention and support to the distinct needs of homeless and foster youth on campus.
The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2019
H.R. 2001 (HCYA)

Corrects long-standing flaws in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homeless assistance for children, youth, and families. Aligns federal definitions of homelessness; requires HUD to honor local community priorities and needs; improves data on homelessness.

Sponsored by:
• U.S. Representatives Steve Stivers (R-OH) and Dave Loebsack (D-IA) in the House of Representatives
**Differing Definitions**

**McKinney-Vento and The Higher Ed. Act**

“Lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”
- Place not meant for human habitation
- Emergency or transitional shelters
- Motel/Hotel self-paid or paid for by a 3rd party
- Sharing the housing of others temporarily

**HUD**

“Lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”
- Place not meant for human habitation
- Emergency or transitional shelters
- Motel/Hotel paid for by a 3rd party
HCYA aligns HUD's definition of homelessness with the definitions used by other federal programs.

Fixing HUD’s Definition

HUD’s narrow and arbitrary definition of homelessness excludes some of the most vulnerable children, youth, and families from assistance.
New Provision

HCYA requires HUD to score local applications primarily on whether they are cost-effective in meeting the priorities and goals that communities identify in their local plans.

Giving Communities More Control Over Federal Dollars

Problem It Addresses

Federal mandates and incentives force communities to prioritize programs for certain populations and program models, regardless of local needs and program effectiveness.
New Provision

Improves HUD homeless data by requiring that communities include children, youth, and families who meet any part of the newly amended definition of homelessness in local counts.

Problem It Addresses

HUD’s data keeps many children, families, and youth invisible and limits public and private action to help them.
Housing for Homeless Students Act, S.767

Updates the Low Income Housing Tax Credit so that students, including veterans, who have experienced homelessness or are currently homeless, can access affordable housing while being full-time students.

Sponsored by:
- U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Rob Portman (R-OH) and Angus King (I-ME) in the Senate
The Economic Mobility Act, H.R. 3300

Expands the eligibility for and the amount of earned income tax credit for taxpayers with no qualifying children (the “childless EITC”). In particular, the minimum age to claim the childless EITC is reduced from 25 to 19 (this reduction does not apply to full-time students).

Potentially, an exemption for homeless and foster youth will be considered as the legislation moves forward.

Sponsored by:
- U.S. Representative Richard Neal (D-MA)
This legislation would help youth formerly in care by lowering the age that former foster youth could claim the EITC from 25 to 18.

**Problem It Addresses**

This would help youth who exit care and on their own—often these youth have earned income but are still struggling to make ends meet. By allowing youth formerly in care to claim the credit during the time they are transitioning to adulthood, it helps to create parity with young adults of the same age that often receive familial support.
In addition to providing funding for federal higher education programs, includes language requiring the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to conduct outreach and disseminate information on financial aid, TRIO and the Chafee program to foster and homeless youth.
But Wait!
Don’t Forget States!
State Bill Enacted in 2019:

- Require institutions of higher education to designate a Liaison for students experiencing homelessness.
- Require institutions of higher education to prioritize students experiencing homelessness for access to existing on-campus housing, develop a plan to provide students experiencing homelessness with housing during school breaks, and allow students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled part-time to access on-campus housing during their first year of school.
State Bill Enacted in 2019:

- Create a Post-Secondary Education Homeless Liaison and Office in the Nevada System of Higher Education.
- Allow for waivers of registration fees and laboratory fees for homeless or unaccompanied students.
HB 1000 requires postsecondary institutions to:

- Designate a Homeless Student Liaison, who will assist students experiencing homelessness in applying for and receiving financial aid and available services.
- Give students experiencing homelessness priority access to on-campus housing, including housing that remains open the most days of the year.
Call to Action!

Ask your members to co-sponsor these bills.

SHC’s Advocacy Center
https://schoolhouse-connection.rallycongress.com
THE FAFSA!

4 Things You Can Do To Help Homeless and Foster Youth

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Youth Leadership and Scholarship Application Open

Scholarship open to applicants:
- Born on or after November 11
- Entering college for the first time in the 2020-21 school year
- Who have experienced homelessness within the last 6 years

DC Summit
Leaders in policy, advocacy, and mentorship

https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/youth-leadership/scholarship-program/