86R13671 SCL-D

By:  Menéndez S.B. No. 2398

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to establishment of the higher education pilot program for foster youth and former foster youth.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Subchapter B, Chapter 264, Family Code, is amended by adding Section 264.1218 to read as follows:

Sec. 264.1218.  HIGHER EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM. (a) In this section, "pilot program" means the higher education pilot program established under this section.

(b)  The department shall establish a higher education pilot program that provides foster youth and former foster youth in Bexar County with:

(1)  intensive outreach and support to:

(A)  improve the understanding and preparation of foster youth and former foster youth for enrollment in institutions of higher education;

(B)  increase the number of foster youth and former foster youth who apply to institutions of higher education; and

(C)  increase the number of foster youth and former foster youth enrollments at institutions of higher education;

(2)  education on:

(A)  the benefits and opportunities of postsecondary education;

(B)  planning for postsecondary education;

(C)  financial aid opportunities for enrollment at institutions of higher education;

(D)  the federal and state services and benefits, including health and mental health care services, available to foster youth and former foster youth while enrolled at an institution of higher education;

(E)  career exploration; and

(F)  financial literacy training, including security from identity theft;

(3)  assistance with submitting applications for:

(A)  enrollment at an institution of higher education;

(B)  financial aid for enrollment at an institution of higher education; and

(C)  scholarships available for foster youth and former foster youth, including a state educational and training voucher program under Section 477(i), Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Section 677(i)); and

(4)  a program, including transportation, provided at no charge to socially and academically prepare foster youth and former foster youth for postsecondary education during the summer before a youth first attends an institution of higher education.

(c)  The department shall collaborate with the Alamo Community College District, The University of Texas at San Antonio, and Texas A&M University--San Antonio to establish and operate the pilot program. An institution of higher education participating in the pilot program shall:

(1)  provide foster youth and former foster youth with flexibility and assistance in completing an application for enrollment;

(2)  coordinate programs with relevant interested persons, both at the institution and outside the institution, to increase the enrollment of foster youth and former foster youth at the institution and align services for the youth;

(3)  adjust the cost of attendance for foster youth and former foster youth to include the cost of housing during periods of non-enrollment;

(4)  provide institutional aid to foster youth and former foster youth to meet any cost of attendance not covered by other federal or state educational grants;

(5)  provide outreach to foster youth and former foster youth to ensure the youth are aware of housing resources available during periods of non-enrollment;

(6)  subsidize any fees associated with orientation and offer transportation at no charge to the foster youth or former foster youth to orientation or for moving to the institution;

(7)  hire and provide training for at least one full-time employee, who has an advanced degree and at least two years of relevant experience, to serve as a contact to provide case management services and monthly face-to-face meetings with students who are foster youth or former foster youth;

(8)  establish or enhance campus support programs to provide students who are foster youth or former foster youth with a wide range of on-campus services, including:

(A)  financial aid assistance;

(B)  career advice; and

(C)  leadership development;

(9)  ensure the availability of robust physical and mental student health services that meet the specific needs of foster youth or former foster youth;

(10)  establish or expand early alert systems to identify and support foster youth or former foster youth who may be struggling academically; and

(11)  collect, review, and monitor information for program improvement.

(d)  The department shall complete an evaluation of the pilot program not later than the second anniversary of the date the pilot program begins.

(e)  The department shall submit a written report on the evaluation of the pilot program to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives. The report must include:

(1)  the number of foster youth or former foster youth who participate in the pilot program;

(2)  the number of foster youth or former foster youth enrolled in an institution of higher education before and after the pilot program; and

(3)  a recommendation on whether to expand the pilot program statewide.

(f)  The executive commissioner may adopt rules necessary to implement this section.

(g)  This section expires September 1, 2023.

SECTION 2.  Not later than January 1, 2020, the Department of Family and Protective Services shall establish the pilot program required by Section 264.1218, Family Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2019.