

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

1 postsecondary education;

2 (B) planning for postsecondary education;

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

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

9 (E) career exploration; and

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

12 (3) assistance with submitting applications for:

13 (A) enrollment at an institution of higher  
14 education;

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

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

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

25 (c) The department shall collaborate with the Alamo  
26 Community College District, The University of Texas at San Antonio,  
27 and Texas A&M University--San Antonio to establish and operate the

1 pilot program. An institution of higher education participating in  
2 the pilot program shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 (8) establish or enhance campus support programs to

1 provide students who are foster youth or former foster youth with a  
2 wide range of on-campus services, including:

3 (A) financial aid assistance;

4 (B) career advice; and

5 (C) leadership development;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3        (g) This section expires September 1, 2023.

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

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