



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

FISCAL NOTE

HOUSE BILL NO. 668

PRINTER'S NO. 1719

PRIME SPONSOR: Benham

COST / (SAVINGS)

FUND	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24
General Fund	\$0	See Fiscal Impact

SUMMARY:

Expands the fostering independence tuition waiver to include different legal guardianship agreements including forms of kinship care.

ANALYSIS:

The bill amends Article XXVI-K of the Public School Code, which contains the fostering independence waiver program.

Two definitions are added:

- “Kinship caregiver” – an individual who is at least 21 years of age and lives with and has legal responsibility for a child.
- “Kinship care” – the care of a child when the biological or custodial parents of the child cannot care for the child.

The term “child” is not defined by the bill, or within Section 2601-K, the definitions section of for the program.

The bill changes eligibility for the fostering independence waiver to the following conditions:

- Being a current resident of the commonwealth
- Being either eligible for the Chafee Education and Training Grant Program, or being under the care of a kinship caregiver, eligible for a Pell Grant and would have been eligible for a Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grant Program if not under kinship care.
- Having applied for all available federal and state grants.

Key eligibility criteria for the Chaffee Education and Training Grant that may be avoided by kinship care include:

- Being a youth who has experienced foster care at age 16 or older, or, after attaining 16 years of age, exited foster care to adoption or permanent legal custodianship, and
- Being eligible for the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood, which targets youth in foster care, age 14 and older, having formerly been in foster care and now age 18-23, leaving foster care through adoption or guardianship at age 16 or older, or being likely to age out of foster care.

These criteria suggest that avoidance of foster care by going into kinship care is the key difference for the “would have been eligible” clause, most likely at age 16 or older.

The bill updates outreach requirements for institutions of higher education and reporting requirements to align with the new eligibility rules under the bill.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2023.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Based on staff analysis of 2017-2021 data from the American Community Survey conducted by the Census Bureau, there are an estimated 16,243 individuals in Pennsylvania who are between age 16 and 26, who are currently in college as an undergraduate and fall into one of the following relationships with the head of household they live with:

Sibling	3,544
Grandchild	8,457
Other relative	4,242
Total	16,243

There are numerous limitations with this estimate.

Because the relationship data is tied to the householder, college students who are living in dorms could be measured as living within noninstitutional group quarters, or with roommates if they live off campus, depending on when the survey is conducted. This estimate could potentially undercount some eligible students. While the definition of kinship caregiver uses the term “lives with” the child, it is likely that a student’s eligibility would not hinge on choosing to live at home versus other living options while at school.

The data does not assess whether a student is Pell Grant eligible. In 2020-21, the most recent full year reported, Pennsylvania had 184,447 Pell Grant recipients. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there were 667,515 students enrolled statewide in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in Fall 2020, meaning the Pell Grant recipients comprised about 27.6% of all students. Fostering independence waiver students could be more likely to have fewer resources and higher rates of Pell eligibility; however, the exact extent is unknown. Overall, the Pell requirement for kinship care students is likely to reduce the number of eligible students who would participate in the program.

The bill would have no direct fiscal impact on the commonwealth itself. The program places the foregone tuition and fee costs on the institution, so costs would be borne by colleges and universities. The impact on institutions would vary based on the type of institution and their student charges. The American Community Survey data used for this estimate does not differentiate between types of postsecondary institutions that students are attending, so the distribution of these costs among different sectors of higher education is indeterminate.

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House Appropriations Committee (D)

DATE: June 27, 2023

Estimates are calculated using the best information available. Actual costs and revenue impact incurred may vary from estimates.