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AB-556 Public postsecondary education: waiver of campus-based fees: veterans. (2025-2026)

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 556

Introduced by Assembly Member Patterson

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Alanis, Davies, Macedo, Sharp-Collins, Schiavo, and Tangipa)

February 12, 2025

An act to amend Section 66025.3 of the Education Code, relating to public postsecondary education.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 556, as introduced, Patterson. Public postsecondary education: waiver of campus-based fees: veterans.

Existing law establishes the University of California, administered by the Regents of the University of California, the California State University, administered by the Trustees of the California State University, and the California Community Colleges, administered by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, as the 3 segments of public postsecondary education in the state. The Donahoe Higher Education Act prohibits the campuses of those segments from charging mandatory systemwide tuition or fees to specified students who apply for a waiver, including a child of any veteran of the United States military who has a service-connected disability, has been killed in service, or has died of a service-connected disability, an undergraduate student who is a recipient of a Medal of Honor, or an undergraduate student who is a child of a recipient of a Medal of Honor and who is no more than 27 years old, if certain requirements are satisfied.

This bill would additionally prohibit the campuses of the 3 segments of public postsecondary education from charging those students any mandatory campus-based fees, as provided. To the extent the bill would add additional duties on community college districts, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would apply to the campuses of the University of California only to the extent that the regents, by appropriate resolution, make it apply.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 66025.3 of the Education Code is amended to read:

66025.3. (a) Notwithstanding Section 76300, a campus of the University of California, the California State University, or the California Community Colleges shall not charge any mandatory systemwide tuition or ~~fees, including fees~~ *or any mandatory campus-based fees, including, but not limited to*, enrollment fees, registration fees, differential fees, ~~or~~ incidental fees, *student services fees, or technology fees*, to any of the following:

(1) A dependent eligible to receive assistance under Article 2 (commencing with Section 890) of Chapter 4 of Division 4 of the Military and Veterans Code.

(2) (A) Any child of any veteran of the United States military who has a service-connected disability, has been killed in service, or has died of a service-connected disability, where the annual income of the child, including the value of any support received from a parent, does not exceed the state poverty level as defined in subdivision (d).

(B) Notwithstanding Section 893 of the Military and Veterans Code, the Department of Veterans Affairs may determine the eligibility for fee waivers for a child described in subparagraph (A).

(3) A dependent, or a surviving spouse who has not remarried, of any member of the California National Guard who, in the line of duty, and while in the active service of the state, was killed, died of a disability resulting from an event that occurred while in the active service of the state, or is permanently disabled as a result of an event that occurred while in the active service of the state. For ~~the~~ purposes of this paragraph, "active service of the state" refers to a member of the California National Guard activated pursuant to Section 146 of the Military and Veterans Code.

(4) (A) An undergraduate student who is a recipient of a Medal of Honor, commonly known as a Congressional Medal of Honor, or an undergraduate student who is a child of a recipient of a Medal of Honor and who is no more than 27 years old, if both of the following requirements are met:

(i) The undergraduate student's annual income, including the value of any support received from a parent, does not exceed the state poverty level as defined in subdivision (d).

(ii) The recipient of the Medal of Honor who is or was the parent of the undergraduate student is, or at the time of the recipient's death was, a California resident as determined pursuant to Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 68000) of Part 41.

(B) The Department of Veterans Affairs shall determine the eligibility of any applicant for a fee waiver under this paragraph.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding Section 76300, a campus of the University of California or the California State University shall not charge any mandatory systemwide tuition or fees, including enrollment fees, registration fees, differential fees, or incidental fees, to a current or former foster youth, if the current or former foster youth meets all of the following conditions:

(A) Is 25 years of age or younger.

(B) Has been in foster care for at least 12 consecutive months after reaching 10 years of age.

(C) Meets any of the following:

(i) Is under a current foster care placement order by the juvenile court.

(ii) Was under a foster care placement order by the juvenile court upon reaching 18 years of age.

(iii) Was adopted, or entered guardianship, from foster care.

(D) Completes and submits the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

(E) Maintains a minimum grade point average and meets other conditions necessary for the student to be in good standing at the public postsecondary educational institution that the current or former foster youth attends, as determined by the appropriate public postsecondary segment.

(F) Meets the financial need requirements established for Cal Grant A awards under Chapter 1.7 (commencing with Section 69430) of Part 42.

(2) A student shall not have the student's mandatory systemwide tuition or fees waived pursuant to this subdivision in excess of the equivalent of attendance in a four-year undergraduate program.

(3) The amount of a student's tuition or fee waiver pursuant to this subdivision shall be reduced by any state or federal financial aid, including scholarships or grants, received by the student for the academic year or semester, or the equivalent, in which the student receives the tuition or fee waiver pursuant to this subdivision.

(c) A person who is eligible for a waiver of tuition or fees under this section may receive a waiver for each academic year during which the person applies for that waiver, but an eligible person may not receive a waiver of tuition or fees for a prior academic year.

(d) As used in this section, the "state poverty level" means annual household income that is less than the amount calculated for a single person with no dependents pursuant to Section 18501 of the Revenue and Tax Code.

(e) The waiver of tuition or fees under this section shall apply only to a person who is determined to be a resident of California pursuant to Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 68000) of Part 41.

(f) Subdivision (a) shall not apply to a dependent of a veteran within the meaning of paragraph (4) of subdivision (a) of Section 890 of the Military and Veterans Code.

(g) The provisions of this section shall not apply to the University of California except to the extent that the Regents of the University of California, by appropriate resolution, make a provision applicable.

SEC. 2. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

REVISIONS:

Heading—Lines 2 and 3.

REVISIONS:

Heading—Line 2.
