

California State Budget Expands Entitlement to Financial Aid for Foster Youth and Invests \$25 Million to Reduce Youth Homelessness

Both Measures led by John Burton Advocates for Youth

June 27, 2018

Today, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. signed the California State Budget for 2018-19, which includes two proposals championed by John Burton Advocates for Youth.

Expands Entitlement to Financial Aid for Foster Youth

The first proposal is a \$5.3 million expansion of the Cal Grant for foster youth students, California's largest financial aid program for students attending college. Currently, only 9% of students who have been in foster care receive the Cal Grant, contributing to their low rate of retention and college completion. Only 4% of students who have been in foster care obtained their bachelor's degree by age 26 as compared to 36% of the general population.

In addition to the significant financial investment, the budget includes changes to state law to ensure ongoing access. These changes include expanding the eligibility for foster youth to receive the Cal Grant from 4 to 8 years, allowing foster youth to receive the Cal Grant entitlement award if they apply prior to age 26, and changing the application deadline for the Cal Grant entitlement application from March 2nd to September 2nd for students attending community college.

According to Xavier Mountain, a youth advocate at John Burton Advocates for Youth and a former foster youth, access to financial aid was a turning point in his life. "It gave me the opportunity to take that next step and realize my full potential to achieve my dreams," says Xavier. "That is what this funding for the Cal Grant expansion will do for foster youth across California."

Invests \$25 Million in Reducing Youth Homelessness

The second proposal backed by John Burton Advocates for Youth and included in the state budget is a \$25 million investment in preventing and addressing homelessness among youth. According to a 2018 study led by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 1 in 30 youth age 13 to 17 experience homelessness over the course of 12 months; the rate is higher for young adults age 18 to 24: 1 in 10.

The \$25 million investment is part of a \$500 million package of assistance provided by the state to local jurisdictions. Applications for the first round of awards are due to the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency by December 31, 2018, and grantees are required to commit 100% of program funds by June 30, 2021.

According to Executive Director Amy Lemley, the inclusion of homeless youth in this package is a big step forward. "For too long, California has looked the other way when it comes to youth homelessness, with no state strategy and no meaningful investment," said Lemley. "Thank you to

Governor Jerry Brown and the California State Legislature for recognizing the needs of homeless youth.”

Alexis Barries, a youth advocate at John Burton Advocates for Youth and formerly homeless youth agrees. “I’m glad to see this change,” says Alexis, emphasizing that most people have no idea about the reality of being a homeless young person. “While people were looking forward to 5:00 p.m. because it would be the end of a work day, I dreaded it because it would mean a night of living in my car,” she explained.

Acknowledgements

John Burton Advocates for Youth would like to express gratitude to the individuals and organizations with whom we worked to make these achievements possible. Thank you to the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, our co-sponsor for the Cal Grant Expansion. Thank you to California State Legislature and Administration of Governor Jerry Brown. Thank you also to the many public agencies, campuses, nonprofit organizations and current and former foster youth who worked closely with John Burton Advocates for Youth to make the case for this important investment.

Thank you also to the generous foundation supporters of John Burton Advocates for Youth, namely the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Pritzker Family Foundation, the May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust, the California Wellness Foundation, the Ticket to Dream Foundation, the Angell Foundation and the College Futures Foundation.

About John Burton Advocates for Youth

John Burton Advocates for Youth is a statewide non-profit organization based in San Francisco, working to improve the quality of life for California’s foster, former foster, and homeless youth through the development of policy advocacy, collaboration, and capacity building. It was founded in 2005 by progressive champion John Burton, a former member of Congress, the California State Assembly and President Pro Tem of the California State Senate. For more information, please visit www.jbaforyouth.org or contact Executive Director Amy Lemley at Amy@jbay.org.