

HOUSE BILL 818

F2

6lr2613

By: **Delegates Embry, Amprey, Hill, Kaiser, Kaufman, Lewis, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Smith, Taveras, and Terrasa**

Introduced and read first time: February 4, 2026

Assigned to: Appropriations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Higher Education – Foster Care Recipients and Homeless Youth – Tuition**
3 **Exemption and Associated Benefits**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring public institutions of higher education to provide free of
5 charge room, board, and required books, course materials, supplies, and equipment
6 to certain foster care recipients and homeless youth who qualify for a certain tuition
7 exemption and enroll as students at the institutions; and generally relating to tuition
8 exemptions and student benefits for foster care recipients and homeless youth.

9 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
10 Article – Education
11 Section 15–106.1
12 Annotated Code of Maryland
13 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

14 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
15 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

16 **Article – Education**

17 15–106.1.

18 (a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

19 (2) (i) “Foster care recipient” means an individual who:

20 1. Was placed in an out-of-home placement by the
21 Department of Human Services; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 2. A. Resided in an out-of-home placement on the
2 individual's 18th birthday or at the time the individual graduated from high school or
3 successfully completed a GED; or

4 B. Resided in an out-of-home placement on or after the
5 individual's 13th birthday for at least 1 year and was placed into guardianship, adopted, or
6 reunited with at least one of the individual's parents.

7 (ii) "Foster care recipient" includes a younger sibling of an individual
8 described in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph if the younger sibling is concurrently placed
9 into guardianship or adopted out of an out-of-home placement by the same guardianship
10 or adoptive family.

11 (3) "Homeless youth" means a child or youth who:

12 (i) Has had a consistent presence in the State for at least 1 year
13 before enrollment in a public institution of higher education that is documented by school,
14 employment, or other records; and

15 (ii) Has been verified as a homeless child or youth, as defined by the
16 federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, at any time during the 24 months
17 immediately preceding the student's enrollment in a public institution of higher education
18 or while the student is enrolled in a public institution of higher education by:

19 1. The Director or designee of a governmental or nonprofit
20 entity that receives public or private funding to provide services to persons experiencing
21 homelessness;

22 2. A local educational agency liaison for children and youth
23 experiencing homelessness designated in accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento
24 Homeless Assistance Act;

25 3. A school counselor;

26 4. A school social worker;

27 5. The Director or a designee of a federal or State outreach
28 and student services program designed to identify and provide services to economically
29 disadvantaged individuals;

30 6. The Director or a designee of a federal or State program
31 for providing early awareness and readiness for undergraduate programs; or

32 7. The Director or a designee of the Director of a financial aid
33 department at the public institution of higher education in which the youth is enrolled or
34 seeks to enroll.

1 (4) "Out-of-home placement" has the meaning stated in § 5-501 of the
2 Family Law Article.

3 (5) (I) "ROOM AND BOARD" MEANS THE CHARGES IMPOSED FOR
4 ON-CAMPUS HOUSING AND FOOD OR ESTIMATED FOR OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING AND
5 FOOD BY A PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

6 (II) "ROOM AND BOARD" DOES NOT INCLUDE TRANSPORTATION
7 COSTS OR OTHER PERSONAL LIVING COSTS.

8 [(5)] (6) (i) "Tuition" means the charges imposed by a public
9 institution of higher education for enrollment at the institution.

10 (ii) "Tuition" includes charges for registration and all fees required
11 as a condition of enrollment in credit-bearing and noncredit courses offered during the fall,
12 winter, spring, or summer term.

13 [(6)] (7) "Vocational certificate" means a certificate or license awarded by
14 a public institution of higher education on completion of a course of study that prepares an
15 individual to work in a career field by taking credit-bearing courses or noncredit courses.

16 (b) (1) A foster care recipient or homeless youth is exempt from paying any
17 tuition at a public institution of higher education, regardless of that foster care recipient's
18 or homeless youth's receipt of any scholarship or grant if:

19 (i) The foster care recipient or homeless youth is enrolled at the
20 institution on or before the date that the foster care recipient or homeless youth reaches
21 the age of 25 years;

22 (ii) The foster care recipient or homeless youth is enrolled as a
23 candidate for a vocational certificate, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree; and

24 (iii) The foster care recipient or homeless youth has filed for federal
25 and State financial aid.

26 (2) If a foster care recipient or homeless youth receives a scholarship or
27 grant for postsecondary study and is enrolled before the recipient's 25th birthday as a
28 candidate for a vocational certificate, an associate's degree, or bachelor's degree at a public
29 institution of higher education, the scholarship or grant may not be applied to the tuition
30 for the foster care recipient or homeless youth.

31 (3) A foster care recipient or homeless youth who is exempt from tuition
32 under this section continues to be exempt until the earlier of:

33 (i) 10 years after first enrolling as a candidate for an associate's
34 degree or a bachelor's degree at a public institution of higher education in the State; or

1 (ii) The date that the foster care recipient or homeless youth is
2 awarded a bachelor's degree.

3 (4) If a public institution of higher education provides on-campus housing,
4 a foster care recipient or homeless youth who is exempt from tuition under this section shall
5 receive priority consideration for on-campus housing at the institution at which the
6 student is enrolled.

7 **(C) (1) IF A FOSTER CARE RECIPIENT OR HOMELESS YOUTH IS EXEMPT**
8 **FROM PAYING TUITION AT A PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER**
9 **SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION AND ENROLLS AS A STUDENT AT THE**
10 **INSTITUTION, THE PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION SHALL PROVIDE**
11 **FREE OF CHARGE TO THE FOSTER CARE RECIPIENT OR HOMELESS YOUTH THE**
12 **FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL BENEFITS:**

13 **(I) 1. ON-CAMPUS ROOM AND BOARD; OR**

14 **2. 100% OF THE PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER**
15 **EDUCATION'S ESTIMATED COST OF ROOM AND BOARD FOR LIVING OFF CAMPUS; AND**

16 **(II) REQUIRED BOOKS, COURSE MATERIALS, SUPPLIES, AND**
17 **EQUIPMENT.**

18 **(2) IF A FOSTER CARE RECIPIENT OR HOMELESS YOUTH RECEIVES A**
19 **SCHOLARSHIP OR GRANT FOR POSTSECONDARY STUDY, THE SCHOLARSHIP OR**
20 **GRANT MAY BE APPLIED TO COVER ALL OR PART OF THE COSTS OF ROOM AND**
21 **BOARD OR REQUIRED BOOKS, COURSE MATERIALS, SUPPLIES, AND EQUIPMENT FOR**
22 **THE FOSTER CARE RECIPIENT OR HOMELESS YOUTH.**

23 **[(c)] (D) (1)** If a public institution of higher education determines that a
24 student is a homeless youth, on request of the student, a public institution of higher
25 education shall notify any public institution of higher education in which the student
26 subsequently enrolls of the student's designation as a homeless youth.

27 (2) If a public institution of higher education receives notice of a student's
28 designation as a homeless youth under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the public
29 institution of higher education shall designate the student as a homeless youth.

30 **[(d)] (E)** Each public institution of higher education shall:

31 (1) (i) Designate a homeless and foster student liaison within its
32 financial aid office or another appropriate office within the institution;

1 (ii) Ensure that the homeless and foster student liaison has
2 expertise in the financial aid eligibility of homeless and foster students; and

3 (iii) Include as part of the homeless and foster student liaison's duties
4 providing assistance to homeless and foster students in applying for federal and State
5 financial aid or other assistance for which they may be eligible;

6 (2) Inform current and prospective students about the homeless and foster
7 student liaison and the services the liaison provides; and

8 (3) (i) Make the application for the tuition exemption **AND**
9 **ACCOMPANYING BENEFITS** established under this section available to prospective and
10 current students; and

11 (ii) Notify students of the availability of the application.

12 **[(e)] (F)** (1) Each public institution of higher education shall establish a
13 process for a foster care recipient or homeless youth to appeal a denial of [a tuition
14 exemption application] **AN APPLICATION FOR A TUITION EXEMPTION AND THE**
15 **ACCOMPANYING BENEFITS**.

16 (2) The appeal process shall include:

17 (i) Written notification to the foster care recipient or homeless youth
18 of the right to appeal;

19 (ii) A timely opportunity for the foster care recipient or homeless
20 youth to be heard; and

21 (iii) A written decision indicating the outcome of the appeal and the
22 reason for the outcome within 30 days of submission of the appeal.

23 **[(f)] (G)** (1) On or before June 1 of each year, each public institution of higher
24 education in the State shall report to the Commission on the aggregate and disaggregate
25 number of foster care recipients and homeless youth, including data disaggregated by age,
26 race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, who:

27 (i) Received a tuition exemption **AND THE ACCOMPANYING**
28 **BENEFITS** under this section during the prior academic year;

29 (ii) Applied for but did not receive a tuition exemption **AND THE**
30 **ACCOMPANYING BENEFITS** under this section during the prior academic year and the
31 reason for the denial;

32 (iii) Previously received a tuition exemption **AND THE**
33 **ACCOMPANYING BENEFITS** under this section at any point during their enrollment at the

1 institution but did not receive the tuition exemption **AND ACCOMPANYING BENEFITS**
2 during the prior academic year and the reason for not continuing to receive the exemption
3 **AND ACCOMPANYING BENEFITS**;

4 (iv) Earned a bachelor's degree, an associate's degree, or a vocational
5 certificate from the institution during the prior academic year; and

6 (v) Filed an appeal in accordance with subsection [(e)] **(F)** of this
7 section, including the outcome of each appeal and the reason for each appeal denial.

8 (2) On or before June 1 each year, each public institution of higher
9 education shall submit to the Commission a brief description of any forms used in
10 conjunction with the tuition exemption **AND ACCOMPANYING BENEFITS** established
11 under this section.

12 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
13 1, 2026.