



Senate Education

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SB 336

Testimony of:

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Chair Baumgardner, Vice-Chair Alley, and Ranking Member Sykes, thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony regarding Senate Bill 336.

SB 336 establishes the Kansas RISE scholarship program. This program would provide two-year post-secondary education scholarships to eligible Kansans. Eligible individuals include former foster youth who were in DCF custody at any time while enrolled in 6th through 12th grades.

DCF currently provides postsecondary education assistance through the Kansas Foster Care Educational Assistance Program, also known as the Tuition Waiver Program. The tuition waiver is available to youth who are enrolled at a Kansas Board of Regents post-secondary institution (university, community college, technical program) and meet one of the following criteria:

- In the custody of DCF and in a foster care placement on the date the youth attained 18 years of age; or
- Released from custody of DCF prior to attaining 18 years of age, after having graduated from high school or fulfilled the requirements for a GED while in foster care placement and the custody of DCF; or
- Adopted from a foster care placement on or after the youth's 16th birthday; or
- Left a foster care placement subject to a permanent custodianship or guardianship under chapter 38 or 59 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated.

For students who qualify for the Tuition Waiver Program, educational institutions waive the costs of tuition and associated fees. Youth remain eligible for the Tuition Waiver through the semester in which they turn 23, as long as they remain in good standing at the educational institution and are making satisfactory progress toward completing the educational program (as defined and monitored by the institution).

SB 336 would increase the number of former foster youth receiving assistance for post-secondary education by providing RISE scholarships to youth that do not qualify for the existing Tuition Waiver Program. However, unlike the existing Tuition Waiver Program, the RISE scholarship program would provide scholarships to individuals beyond former foster youth. Any Kansan that graduated high school in the last 5 years, has a GED, or is currently in 12th grade would be eligible for a RISE scholarship.

DCF estimates that 362 former foster youth would participate in the RISE scholarship program in FY 2021. We expect that participation would increase annually and reach 391 in FY 2024. DCF cannot estimate how many individuals outside of former foster youth would participate in the program.

DCF supports SB 336's intention to broaden post-secondary assistance to youth that spent time in DCF custody. However, we are also wary of the large financial impact the bill may have given the size of the pool of all individuals that would be eligible for scholarships.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony on Senate Bill 336. I'm happy to answer questions or provide additional information if requested.