

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/CS/HB 1577— Homeless Youth

by Health and Human Services Committee; Children, Families, and Seniors Subcommittee; and Rep. Woodson and others (SB 1708 by Senators Garcia, Jones, and Book)

The bill addresses the needs of children and young adults who are experiencing homelessness, including those who are certified by the local school district liaison under current Florida law, and amends provisions that will improve access for youth who are currently in, or were formerly in, foster care.

Specifically, the bill:

- Requires district school boards to issue a homeless youth certified under s. 743.067, F.S., a card that includes information on his or her rights and available benefits, and allows health care providers to accept the issued card as proof of the young adult's status as a certified homeless youth.
- Expands the Keys-to-Independence program that provides assistance with the costs of driver education, licensure, and motor vehicle insurance to children in foster care to include certified homeless youth who meet certain requirements.
- Waives fees for certified copies of a birth certificate for certified homeless youth and young adults who aged out of foster care.
- Requires postsecondary institutions to have knowledgeable, accessible, and responsive liaisons to assist children and young adults who were formerly in foster care and those experiencing homelessness with issues related to the use of a tuition and fee exemption.
- Requires postsecondary institutions to retain original documents on a student's tuition and fee exemption and prohibits additional request for such documentation.
- Clarifies provisions related to homeless youth who are certified under s. 743.067, F.S., and updates the definition and criteria for certification to align with federal law.
- Amends the definition of which students qualify for a tuition and fee exemption as homeless children and youth to align this definition with federal law.
- Requires any student determined to be eligible for a tuition and fee exemption as a result of being a homeless child or youth for a preceding year to be presumed homeless for subsequent years unless an institution has conflicting information.
- Directs the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to evaluate the effectiveness of campus liaisons and of local school districts' delivery of benefits and services available under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 117-0