

Governor Carney Signs Bill Creating Tuition Waiver Program for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

New program waives tuition, room and board at Delaware public universities and colleges for eligible students

WILMINGTON, Del. – Governor John Carney on Thursday signed into law [House Bill 123](#), legislation sponsored by Representative Krista Griffith and Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth Lockman that creates the [Delaware Fostering Independence Through Education Tuition Waiver Program](#) to support students in foster care as they work toward a higher education degree. This new program requires Delaware State University, Delaware Tech Community College and the University of Delaware to waive all tuition and fees, including room and board, for any youth who has aged out or spent at least one year in foster care as a teenager.

“Making sure all of Delaware’s students have an opportunity to succeed has been our top priority,” said **Governor Carney**. “This legislation will ensure some of our most vulnerable children are supported when pursuing higher education. Thank you to Representatives Griffith and Longhurst, Senators Lockman and Poore, the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, and other advocates who carried this important legislation over the finish line. Our children will be better off because of it.”

Under this legislation, eligible students must apply for any and all financial aid before being granted the tuition waiver

for any leftover tuition and fees. Students may use the tuition waiver until they turn 27.

“Investing in our students’ dreams has a ripple effect across Delaware. With this tuition waiver program, our youth in care have a chance to leap over obstacles as they enter adulthood. I’m thankful for the support of our Governor and the Delaware Legislature to make this program a reality,” said **Josette Manning, Cabinet Secretary of the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (DSCYF)**. “Our youth who experience foster care are incredibly resilient, despite facing a disproportionate number of challenges in their young lives, and we can do our part as a state to support them on their journey.”

Prior to this legislation being signed, youth experiencing foster care only had access to the federal Chafee Educational and Training Voucher program and the Ivyane D.F. Davis Memorial Scholarship Fund, a state-funded scholarship program. With the tuition waiver program in place, youth who have experienced foster care can pursue their dreams without worrying about how to pay for college or where to find housing.

“We know that young people who have been through the foster care system as teens and have aged out experience worse outcomes overall than their peers in terms of educational attainment, full-time employment, stable housing and financial independence,” said **Rep. Krista Griffith, lead House sponsor of HB 123**. “We can do more to make sure our students in foster care thrive as adults by removing the financial barrier to higher education. This will encourage youth in foster care to go out and earn a college degree, giving them tools they need to identify and obtain a path forward to achieving their dreams.”

“Young people who have worked hard to get to college after spending significant time in Delaware’s foster care system

deserve every ounce of our support,” said **Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman**. “I want to thank Rep. Krista Griffith and Governor John Carney for recognizing that fact and taking action today to remove barriers that prevent some of our most vulnerable young people from achieving their goals, realizing their potential, and embarking on an education that will lead them to a brighter future.”

According to DSCYF, it is estimated that about 15-20 incoming freshmen will likely take advantage of tuition waivers under House Bill 123 each year. Governor Carney supported this legislation in his [2020 State of the State Address](#).

“This legislation is so important,” said **Mayda Berrios, student at Delaware State University**. “Although I’m graduating this year, I am so happy that some many young people will be able to benefit from this. Thanks to the members of the General Assembly who pushed this beyond the Youth Advisory Council and made this into a bill today so that the future generation of foster youth who are experiencing hardships can now experience higher education.”

Additional information on the tuition waiver program can be found [here](#).

Video from today’s bill signing can be found [here](#).

Photos from today’s bill signing can be found [here](#).

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