STATE OF NEW YORK

9170

IN SENATE

May 2, 2024

Introduced by Sen. STAVISKY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to establishing liaison officers, regional contacts, and campus contacts to assist college students experiencing homelessness to find housing

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new article 127-A to read as follows:

ARTICLE 127-A

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Section 6360. Definition.

6361. Liaison officers, regional contacts, and campus contacts.

6362. Access to housing for students experiencing homelessness.

6363. Priority enrollment.

6364. Assistance with college fees for students experiencing homelessness.

6365. Pilot program to increase enrollment, attendance, and success in college.

§ 6360. Definition. As used in this article, the term "students experiencing homelessness" means students who at any time during the current school year or the twenty-four months immediately preceding their enrollment in college have been homeless, as defined by the meaning assigned to the term "homeless children and youths" under 42 U.S.C. Section 11434a and includes students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by a college during an academic term but who are homeless between academic terms.

§ 6361. Liaison officers, regional contacts, and campus contacts. 1. The state university of New York and the city university of New York each shall hire at least one full-time equivalent staff member to act as a liaison officer for current and incoming students experiencing homelessness.

2. The liaison officer shall:

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(a) have knowledge of and expertise in: federal and state financial aid eligibility of students experiencing homelessness, including their eligibility as independent students under Section 1087vv of the federal Higher Education Act; support services, including health services; housing resources offered by the college and external housing resources, including housing navigation services and existing housing programs for homeless or low-income individuals or families; meal plan and food programs and assistance, counseling services, academic supports, and other resources available to students at the university; and best practices to identify and serve students experiencing homelessness, with the goal of maximizing their enrollment, retention, and success in college;

(b) create systems for students experiencing homelessness to access support services and other resources available to the students at the university; coordinate with the state university of New York and the city university of New York on innovative programming aimed at increasing access, enrollment, attendance and success in college for students experiencing homelessness, including pilot initiatives pursuant to section sixty-three hundred sixty-five of this article;

(c) provide professional development and other technical assistance activities to ensure the availability of campus contact persons for current and incoming students experiencing homelessness at the university, institute best practices to identify students experiencing homelessness, and have information about financial aid, support services, and best practices as designated by paragraph (a) of this subdivision;

(d) provide professional development and other technical assistance activities to professors and university staff working in the areas of financial aid, housing, student services, and teaching and academic support regarding the characteristics, needs, strengths, and identification of students experiencing homelessness;

(e) complete necessary administrative tasks and data collection related to students experiencing homelessness, including developing, administering, and analyzing the results of a survey annually, collaboratively with campus contacts designated pursuant to subdivision four of this section, social work interns, and other essential staff, to collect data on student access to resources needed to address homelessness across the state university of New York and the city university of New York; and

(f) make available an annual report of the survey administered pursuant to paragraph (e) of this subdivision on the websites of the state university of New York and the city university of New York.

3. The state university of New York and the city university of New York each shall require professors and university staff to attend at least one training per year offered by the liaison officer for current and incoming students experiencing homelessness.

4. The liaison officer for the state university of New York shall hire one part-time adjunct staff to serve as regional contact in each of ten economic development regions. Such regional contacts shall supervise the campus contacts in their region and support the liaison officer to ensure that students experiencing homelessness are identified, informed of services available to them, and able to access support services and other resources available in the region.

5. The liaison officer for the city university of New York shall hire five part-time adjunct staff to serve as regional contacts. Such regional contacts shall supervise the campus contacts in their regions and support the liaison officer to ensure that students experiencing homelessness are identified, informed of services available to them, and

able to access support services and other resources available in the region.

6. Each college shall designate and may provide a stipend to at least one person, who may be an employee of the college or an undergraduate or graduate level student of any college who is completing an internship as part of obtaining a degree in social work or a related field, to act as a campus contact person for current and incoming students experiencing homelessness.

7. The campus contact person shall:

(a) institute best practices to identify current and incoming students experiencing homelessness, including:

(i) posting flyers, posters, and other written materials about the rights of students experiencing homelessness using understandable and culturally competent language, in locations on campus and in the community where students experiencing homelessness are likely to see them;

(ii) posting, using understandable and culturally competent information, about the rights of students experiencing homelessness on college websites and social media;

(iii) collaborating with student organizations and other organizations providing food, housing, or other services on campus and in the community; and

(iv) sharing information about the rights of students experiencing homelessness and the process to refer students who may be experiencing homelessness to the campus contact with professors and other campus staff;

(b) provide students experiencing homelessness with information regarding their federal and state financial aid eligibility, including their eligibility as independent students under Section 1087vv of the federal Higher Education Act, and assistance to such students to ensure they are able to apply for and receive federal and state financial aid and all available on and off campus services for which they are eligible;

(c) provide students experiencing homelessness with information regarding support services, health services, housing resources offered by the college and external housing resources, housing navigation services and existing housing programs for homeless or low-income individuals or families, meal plan and food programs and assistance, counseling services, academic supports, and other resources available to the students at the college;

(d) participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities offered by the liaison officer; and

(e) contact liaisons designated under 42 U.S.C. Section 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii) as necessary to facilitate successful transitions from secondary to postsecondary education for students experiencing homelessness.

§ 6362. Access to housing for students experiencing homelessness. Each college shall:

1. prioritize students experiencing homelessness for access to existing housing resources offered by the college, as needed, during and between academic terms, including granting them first priority for housing facilities that remain open for occupation during the most days in a calendar year; and

2. develop a plan to connect students experiencing homelessness with external housing resources when existing housing resources offered by the college are not available, including through working with existing housing programs for homeless or low-income individuals or families.

§ 6363. Priority enrollment. Each college that administers a priority enrollment system shall grant priority in that system for enrollment in classes to students experiencing homelessness.

§ 6364. Assistance with college fees for students experiencing homelessness. For students experiencing homelessness, each college shall:

1. waive administrative fees and fees based on enrollment, including health and wellness, student activity, consolidated services, and technology fees, that are not fully covered by a student's financial aid package; and

2. defer the payment of any fee or deposit, including housing fees and deposits, that are covered by a student's financial aid package until the college receives the aid, such that students shall not incur late fees on payments delayed while awaiting disbursement of financial aid.

§ 6365. Pilot program to increase enrollment, attendance, and success in college. 1. The department, when monies therefore have been appropriated by the legislature or are otherwise available, is hereby authorized to establish a pilot program to increase the enrollment, attendance, and success in college of students experiencing homelessness. Campuses of the state university of New York and of the city university of New York shall be eligible to apply for grants through the pilot program and shall accommodate up to five hundred students. Applications and proposed activities shall be coordinated with the university liaison officer and the campus contact person designated pursuant to section sixty-three hundred sixty-one of this article. The department shall evaluate applications and award funds based on quality, need, and compliance with the elements outlined in subdivision two of this section.

2. Applications for grants shall include the following elements:

(a) staffing with sufficient capacity and authority to implement all the proposed activities;

(b) coordination with the local housing authority, department of homeless services, department of social services, and public and private agencies that provide housing, shelter, or services for homeless or low-income individuals or families;

(c) housing navigation services to assist students to find funding for housing resources offered by the college and external housing resources, including working with existing housing programs for homeless or low-income individuals or families;

(d) outreach to and services for students who are parents, including housing services;

(e) collaboration with student organizations, opportunity programs, or student support programs to identify and support students experiencing homelessness;

(f) plans to implement a questionnaire for all enrolling students that will help determine whether enrolling students are experiencing homelessness;

(g) designated funding for housing, such as temporary dormitory rooms while housing navigation services take place, housing in the community, host homes, housing during academic breaks, and fees associated with housing, including application fees and move-in stipends for furniture and supplies; and

(h) financial literacy, soft skills, and life skills training, provided by the applicant or in collaboration with a community agency.

3. Applications for grants are encouraged to include the following:

(a) plans to incorporate and appropriately supervise graduate-level interns, particularly social work interns, to undertake appropriate activities;

(b) plans to develop relationships with landlords and incentives to house college students, including in collaboration with existing housing programs for homeless or low-income individuals or families; and

(c) voluntary questions about homelessness on college application forms.

4. applicants shall submit an annual report of data regarding the access to programs and services provided to students in the pilot program that are necessary to meet their basic needs, including food, housing, physical and mental health care, and related services.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.