

SESSION OF 2002

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2956

As Amended by House Committee on
Higher Education

Brief*

HB 2956, as amended, would establish a tuition and fee waiver program for students who are in the custody of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) when they reach 18 years of age and who enroll in a public postsecondary institution in Kansas within two years of the time they graduate from a high school or satisfy the requirements for a general educational development (GED) certificate. Eligible institutions are area vocational schools, technical colleges, community colleges, and the public universities under the governance of the State Board of Regents. The bill would limit the number of students for whom tuition and fees could be waived under the program to three per year for each institution.

Under HB 2956, an institution that waives tuition and fees for a student would apply to the State Board of Regents for reimbursement of the amount of tuition and fees waived. Payment of the reimbursement would be subject to appropriation.

The waiver of tuition and fees could not exceed eight semesters of undergraduate study. The program would terminate June 30, 2006, except that students who receive waivers before that date would continue to receive waivers until they complete their studies.

Background

HB 2956 was recommended for introduction by the Joint Committee on Children's Issues, which included as part of its charge the condition of foster care children who "age out of the system" or who are

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org/cgi-bin/fulltext/bills.cgi>

ready to make the transition from foster care to independent living. Testifying before the House Committee as a proponent of the bill, Representative Landwehr, Chair of the Joint Committee on Children's Issues, called these individuals "forgotten children" and said a tuition and fee waiver to attend Kansas public postsecondary institutions would provide an incentive for children who have been in the foster care system to continue their educations, participate fully in society, and become truly self sufficient. Senator Jackson, also a member of the Joint Committee, testified in support of the bill and presented information about similar programs in other states.

The House Higher Education Committee amended HB 2956 to limit the number of students who would be eligible for a waiver to three per year, per institution. The Committee also made the program more flexible by deleting the requirement that a student had to enroll in a postsecondary institution within one year of reaching 18 years of age. Instead, a student who is in the custody of SRS when the student reaches the age of 18 may enroll at any time within two years after completing high school or satisfying the requirements for a GED certificate.

Also testifying in support of the bill was a representative of SRS, the Executive Director of the Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, and two former foster care children. Staff from the State Board of Regents took a neutral position and explained the fiscal impact of the bill.

The fiscal note prepared by the Division of Budget was based on the bill as introduced and assumes that all of the students who are estimated to be in SRS custody when they reach the age of 18 (150 students per year) would take advantage of the program. Under that assumption, the maximum fiscal impact, assuming 150 students enrolled each of four years at the most expensive institutions, would be \$4,300,000 at the end of four years. If 150 students enrolled in less-expensive two-year institutions, the maximum fiscal impact at the end of two years would be \$562,500. In addition, the State Board of Regents indicates that the bill would cause an increase in its operating expenses, but a precise estimate of the impact is unknown.

The amendment added by the House Committee limiting the number of students per year for each institution to three would reduce the fiscal impact of the bill. In addition, testimony before the Commit-

tee indicates that it is highly unlikely that all foster care children in SRS custody at the age of 18 would enroll in postsecondary institutions. As noted, the program would be subject to appropriation.