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DeSantis signs bill to expand foster care financial aid to caregivers, kids

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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill that financially benefits more people who care for needy children and help additional children who were in the foster care system attend a state college or university on April 12, 2022. BY [CARL JUSTE](#)

TALLAHASSEE

Gov. Ron DeSantis on Tuesday signed a bill to financially benefit more people who care for needy children and help additional children who were in the foster care system attend a state college or university.

The bill will expand access for monthly payments to caregivers of foster children by giving relatives and non-relatives the same amount of money as licensed foster parents.

It will also make more foster care children exempt from paying tuition and fees at state

colleges and universities. The state already allows certain foster youth to receive a tuition and fee exemption. But the bill, which takes effect July 1, will expand the criteria to the following kids who have gone through the shelter system, have been through dependency proceedings or have had their parents' rights terminated:

- Kids who are or were in out-of-home care.
- Children who spent at least 18 months in out-of-home care but who were reunited with their parents.
- Kids who were adopted after being in the care of the state.
- Kids who were placed in permanent guardianship and remain there until turning 18, or who enrolled in an eligible institution before turning 18.

“All these kids deserve an opportunity and we’re going to do what we can to make sure that their dreams and hopes and aspirations can become a reality in a loving home,” DeSantis said.

DeSantis signed the bill ([HB 7034](#)) at Miami Dade College, alongside Lt. Gov. Jeanette Nuñez, Senate President Wilton Simpson and other state lawmakers, including Sens. Ileana Garcia, R-Miami, and Manny Diaz, R-Hialeah.



On Tuesday, April 12, 2022, Gov. Ron DeSantis, center, signs a bill that financially benefits more

people who care for needy children and helps additional children who were in the foster care system attend a state college or university. The bill signing took place at Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus in Miami, Florida. Carl Juste cjuste@miamiherald.com

Nuñez said Miami Dade College is a “symbol of hope and opportunity for so many in our community” and has a “strong network of support for students transitioning from foster care.”

Simpson, who was adopted at the age of 6, said the bill is taking a “holistic” approach to helping vulnerable children while they are in the system and as they exit it.

He lauded that the bill aims to create parity with the rate currently paid to licensed foster care and certain relative and non-relative caregivers, and how the tuition waiver could have long-term impact on vulnerable children’s lives.

“Think of how many other problems in our society we might solve, right?” Simpson said.

DeSantis said the bill is a commitment to “adoption and foster care,” and that it sends a clear message that Florida is committed “to the proposition that every life counts.”



On Tuesday, April 12, 2022, Gov. Ron DeSantis, left, gives his opening remarks before he signed a bill that financially benefits more people who care for needy children and helps additional children who were in the foster care system attend a state college or university. The bill signing was at Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus in Miami, Florida. Carl Juste cjuste@miamiherald.com

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