This fiscal impact statement is produced in compliance with the South Carolina Code of Laws and House and Senate rules. The focus of the analysis is on governmental expenditure and revenue impacts and may not provide a comprehensive summary of the legislation.

Bill Number:	S. 0824 Introduced on January 15, 2026
Subject:	South Carolina Fostering Futures Act
Requestor:	Senate Education
RFA Analyst(s):	Tipton
Impact Date:	March 11, 2026

Fiscal Impact Summary

This bill establishes the South Carolina Fostering Futures Act and requires all state-supported colleges and universities to waive the payment of certain tuition and fees for individuals who have a specified history in the custody of or in foster care with the Department of Social Services (DSS). The student must be enrolled in a program of study for an undergraduate certificate, diploma, or first bachelor's degree. The bill establishes several requirements for state institutions of higher learning related to housing, access to campus employment, and other provisions that must be offered to eligible students. The bill further requires each institution of higher learning to report annually to DSS deidentified, aggregate summary data regarding eligible students.

The expenditure impact of this bill on state institutions of higher learning will vary. The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), Lander University (Lander), as well as the Technical College System (Tech System) indicated that the implementation of the tuition waiver program can be managed with existing resources. Coastal Carolina University (CCU) reported that if the number of eligible students under the bill increases, the institution will need an additional FTE, with annual salary and fringe of $75,000, to act as the required liaison for eligible students to provide the guidance and support required by the bill.

The bill will have no expenditure impact on the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) in their support of institutions of higher learning in implementing the provisions of the bill.

The fiscal impact of this bill on DSS is pending, contingent upon further review by the agency.

This bill is expected to reduce tuition revenue for state institutions of higher learning, depending on the number of future students who are eligible to receive free tuition under the program. The University of South Carolina (USC), CCU, Winthrop University (Winthrop), and Lander reported that between 3 and 31 self-reported students at each institution would currently qualify for free tuition under the bill. This would equate to a reduction in current annual tuition revenue by approximately $35,000 to $381,000 per institution. CCU, Winthrop, and Lander further indicated that the number of current or former foster youth seeking enrollment under this bill may increase in future years, further reducing tuition revenue for the institutions. However, as the actual tuition revenue impact will depend on the number of future eligible students who choose to enroll and receive the tuition and fee waiver, the impact on Other Funds revenue for state institutions of higher learning is undetermined.

Explanation of Fiscal Impact

Introduced on January 15, 2026
State Expenditure
This bill establishes the South Carolina Fostering Futures Act and requires all state-supported colleges and universities to waive the payment of tuition and fees for certain current and former foster youth who are enrolled in a program of study for an undergraduate certificate, diploma, or first bachelor's degree. The bill defines certain current and former foster youth as an individual aged twenty-five years or younger who was in the legal custody of DSS on the day of the individual's eighteenth birthday before exiting foster care, is currently in the legal custody of DSS under extended foster care, was adopted from DSS foster care at age thirteen or later, or was in the legal custody of DSS foster care for three or more cumulative years. The bill specifies additional eligibility requirements as well as the tuition and fee expenses to which the waiver must apply.

The bill provides that state institutions of higher learning may require documentation to confirm eligibility and specifies housing requirements that must be offered to students receiving the waiver. The bill requires institutions of higher learning to provide priority access to federal work-study positions and any campus-based student employment programs administered by the institution for students eligible under the bill. Institutions must designate at least one staff member to serve as an institutional liaison for eligible students who must provide support and guidance related to college entry processes. The bill requires each institution of higher learning to report annually to DSS deidentified, aggregate summary data regarding eligible students. The bill also states that the institutions of higher learning must consider students eligible under this section to be financially independent for purposes of federal and state financial aid classification, and an eligible student may not be required to provide parental information or documentation of parental income.

The expenditure impact of this bill on state institutions of higher learning will vary. MUSC and Lander as well as the Tech System indicated that the implementation of the tuition waiver program can be managed with existing resources. CCU reported that if the number of eligible students under the bill increases, the institution will need an additional FTE, with annual salary and fringe of $75,000, to act as the required liaison for eligible students to provide the guidance and support required by the bill.

The bill will have no expenditure impact on CHE in their support of institutions of higher learning in implementing the provisions of the bill.

The fiscal impact of this bill on DSS is pending, contingent upon further review by the agency.

State Revenue
This bill will reduce tuition and fee revenue for state institutions of higher learning, depending on the number of current or former foster youth students who will be eligible for a tuition waiver and enroll under this program. USC, CCU, Lander, and Winthrop indicated that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid includes the ability for applicants to self-report a foster care

or DSS history. Based on the current number of self-reported eligible students, USC, Winthrop, CCU, and Lander estimated the potential tuition revenue impact of the bill, shown in the following table.

Institution	FAFSA Eligible Students	Annual Tuition Impact
University of South Carolina	31	($380,928)
Winthrop University	30	($325,000)
Coastal Carolina University	24	($168,000)
Lander University	3	($35,100)

CCU, Winthrop, and Lander also indicated that the number of current or former foster youth seeking enrollment under this bill may increase in future years, further reducing tuition revenue for the institutions. However, as the actual tuition revenue impact will depend on the number of future eligible students who choose to enroll and receive the tuition and fee waiver, the impact on Other Funds revenue for state institutions of higher learning is undetermined.

Local Expenditure
N/A

Local Revenue
N/A

Frank A. Rainwater, Executive Director