

Beshear, State AGs Call on U.S. Department of Education to Uphold Student Protections

Federal government must protect students from abuse of predatory schools

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 14, 2017) – Attorney General Andy Beshear and 20 other state attorneys general have submitted public comments to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, calling a move by the U.S. Department of Education to replace existing student protections a “waste of resources and a betrayal of students.”

The July 12 comments are in response to the department’s June 14 announcement of intentions to delay large portions of the Borrower Defense Rule, which was designed to hold abusive higher education institutions accountable for cheating students and taxpayers out of billions of dollars in federal loans.

According to the attorneys general, the Borrower Defense Rule was created in large part by state and federal investigations into for-profit schools like the now-defunct Corinthian Colleges, and was finalized after robust and thorough negotiated rulemaking with input from numerous stakeholders.

Beshear said the department announced it would withdraw the Rule without soliciting, receiving or responding to any comment from the public, and without engaging in the required process.

“It is my hope that the department will not cast aside all the hard work and progress achieved during its previous rulemakings and turn its back on the critical protections it promised to borrowers,” Beshear said. “Attorneys general and all the stakeholders must continue to pressure the department to protect students from abuse at the hands of predatory schools.”

Under the Borrower Defense Rule, a successful enforcement action against a school by a state attorney general entitles borrowers to obtain loan forgiveness, and enables the Department of Education to seek repayment of any amounts forgiven from the school.

The attorneys general also oppose the department’s efforts to replace the Gainful Employment Rule, which empowers students to make informed decisions about their education and protects students from programs that will leave them with burdensome debt and poor job prospects.

For-profit colleges AGs have investigated and taken enforcement actions against include: American Career Institute; Ashford University/Bridgepoint Education Inc.; Corinthian Colleges Inc.; Career Education Corporation; Education Management Corporation; Daymar College; DeVry University; ITT Tech; National College of Kentucky and Westwood Colleges.

Beshear’s office is committed to holding for-profit colleges accountable in Kentucky and is working to help defrauded students.

In December 2016, Beshear announced nearly 3,500 former students of Daymar College’s Kentucky campuses and online programs will receive restitution checks totaling \$1.2 million. The payments are pursuant to a settlement agreement the Office of the Attorney General entered into with Daymar in 2015 resolving a consumer protection lawsuit.

Beshear said students who have been a victim of a for-profit college may contact his office by phone, 502-696-5300

Gov. Bevin’s Fostering Success Program Begins Second Year of Job Readiness Training for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 11, 2017) – Fostering Success, the summer employment initiative for Kentucky youth who are aging out of the state foster care program, is celebrating the start of its second year. At least 72 young people are expected to be involved in Fostering Success this summer. Last year, 52 completed the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) program.

Fostering Success gives older youth in foster care the opportunity to access employment, job training and leadership skills through a collaborative program that places them in entry-level positions with state government agencies.

“Very often, children who age out of the foster care system lack the social and financial management skills they need to find jobs and be productive, self-reliant adults,” said Gov. Matt Bevin. “Fostering Success is one of many ways our administration is seeking to correct that. With mentoring from seasoned professionals, and an opportunity to work within state government or with respected, private sector partners, these young adults are given an excellent chance to acquire some of the hands-on experience they need to become future leaders in Kentucky.”

The summer youth employment program serves Kentucky’s foster youth between the ages of 17 and 23. Program participants must have a high school diploma or the equivalent to be selected for the 10-week employment. Half of the youth who participated in last year’s initial Fostering Success collaborative extended their employment to nine months and three of last year’s participants were offered full-time employment with CHFS.

First Lady Glenna Bevin said that foster youth might need extra guidance from a caring community as they mature.

“The transition to adulthood can be more difficult for foster children who have experienced so much instability and trauma that was no fault of their own,” said First Lady Bevin. “Fostering Success gives these youth committed role models and a community of support in addition to the invaluable job training and ‘soft skills’ they will get from a summer of comprehensive career preparation.”

Fostering Success includes summer employment opportunities in several state and CHFS offices – including the Department of Parks and the Department for Community Based Services, the Office of Legal Services and Child Support Enforcement – across the state.

Start dates are staggered during the summer months because of worksite needs and application processing time. Independent Living Coordinators, who assist foster youth who are aging out of care, will continue to recruit young people for the employment opportunity through mid-July. Kentucky Works contractors are facilitating two-day job readiness training for the youth. Facilitators addressed areas like workplace attire, time and attendance, cell phone usage, transportation needs and meal breaks.

The program also features a mentoring component: Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) supervisors and regional Independent Living Coordinators are providing job coaching and guidance. In Jefferson County, the Orphan Care Alliance is working to connect each of the participants in that region with life coaches who will remain connected to the youth after the program ends.

In addition, program partner True-UP, a Louisville-based foster youth support organization that collaborated with the inaugural Fostering Success program in 2016, is expanding its financial literacy and employment retention training to Elizabethtown and Lexington.

“Work readiness skills are so valuable, yet they can be more difficult to obtain for foster children, who may experience many more barriers to independence during their transitional years,” said CHFS Secretary Vickie Yates Brown Glisson. “I am so proud that my agency continues to collaborate with businesses, organizations like True-UP and other state agencies to help our foster youth develop skills to improve their lives.”

Kentucky Labor Cabinet Secretary Derrick Ramsey said Fostering Success is cultivating new talent for the state’s changing workforce.

“For Kentucky to reach its full economic potential, we will need the talents, leadership and hard work that exists currently in our state’s youth,” Labor Secretary Ramsey stated. “Fostering Success is laying the foundation between a trained workforce and employers, and we will continue to seek areas where we can grow this pipeline for industries in need. In the end, this summer program can be a winning formula for everyone involved.”

DCBS Commissioner Adria Johnson said there are more than 8,500 children with active placements in out of home care in Kentucky.

“Foster youth who are aging out of care can face a lot of challenges,” Johnson said. “The transition to adulthood is more complex without a permanent family as a resource. Fostering Success is part of a network that gives these older foster youth connections to get help when they need it and to see a positive future for themselves.”

Courtney Parr, a Fostering Success participant assigned to the DCBS Central Office, said her aspirations for a career in social services are reinforced by her immersion in the summer employment program.

“I wanted to participate in the program because not only was I a former foster youth but I have developed a passion for the social work field and am currently working on my degree in social work,” she said. “I love seeing the other side of the foster care system. After the 10 weeks, I hope to have an opportunity to continue my internship here while I continue my studies at Kentucky State University, where I am currently a junior.”

Tonya Bailey is the Independent Living Coordinator for the 15-county Northeastern Region, which includes Morehead and Ashland, said she was “thrilled” when Fostering Success was established last year – her region had seven youth in the inaugural program.

“This summer, the Northeastern Region’s 12 Fostering Success participants are working in DCBS and other CHFS offices,” concluded Bailey. “The opportunities the youth have been given through the Fostering Success Program is nothing short of amazing.”

Bailey said two youth from last year’s program returned this year, and she envisions a couple of current participants applying for permanent cabinet positions.

Within the DCBS offices, the youth perform clerical tasks similar to an office support assistant, like directing phone calls, filing, preparing documents and assisting administrative assistants. They also get a closer look at how Division of Protection and Permanency staff works to keep children safe and secure.

For more information about Fostering Success and the Kentucky foster care program, call 1-800-232-KIDS (5437).

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