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## **For Immediate Release**

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## **Senator Ileana Garcia and Representative Nicholas Duran File Bill to Expand College Tuition Fee Exemption Eligibility for Students in Out-of-Home Care**

**Miami, FL – Senator Ileana Garcia (R-Miami) and Representative Nicholas X. Duran (D-Miami)** filed legislation, [Senate Bill 304](#) and [House Bill 203](#), Student Fee Exemptions, which clarify and expand qualifications for the existing postsecondary tuition and fee exemption for students who are raised in out-of-home care.

“This legislation corrects a missing piece of the tuition waiver that was brought to President Simpson’s attention by a concerned grandparent. Transitioning from high school to college is a particularly vulnerable time for foster care youth and other children raised in out-of-home care. The tuition waiver has been an important tool for economic and academic self-sufficiency for youth aging out of foster care, and we want children raised by their relatives to have the same benefit,” said **Senator Garcia**, Chair of the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs. “Dedicated grandparents like Ms. Dunn step up to the plate to raise their grandchildren, keeping them out of the foster care. Those heroic caregivers and the children they take in should not be at a disadvantage when they seek opportunities in higher education.”

“I am a father of two elementary school children and I believe each child, regardless of their family or economic situation, deserves the opportunity to attend college. This important piece of legislation will provide more youth who are raised in out-of-home care a pathway to learn, prepare for future careers, and the ability to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency,” said **Representative Duran**.

Building on Senate Bill 52 (2021), the bills specify that the tuition waiver applies to students who are currently in the custody of a relative or non-relative, or were at the

time they turned 18, regardless of whether or not the caregivers receive foster care room and board rates. Specifically, that a youth is eligible for the tuition waiver, even if the relative caregiver placement did not occur specifically under s. 39.5085, F.S., or s. 39.6225, F.S.; or the placement occurred before the relative caregiver tuition waiver was enacted.

“When it came time for my granddaughter to apply for college, we were surprised to learn that because I made the decision to raise Sabrina and her brothers, rather than seeing them raised in foster care, she would not be eligible for the college tuition waiver that is available for other students who stay in foster care,” said Ms. Pamela Dunn, who contacted the office of **Senate President Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby)** earlier this year. “I want to make sure other grandparents and relatives who have raised their family members don’t have to face the same logistical hurdles we had when trying to figure out how to pay for college. We are really grateful to President Simpson, Senator Garcia and Representative Duran for advancing this bill that will be a great benefit for families like ours.”

The tuition waiver applies to the payment of tuition and fees, including lab fees, at any state university, Florida College System institution or school district that provides workforce education programs and is valid until the student reaches 28 years of age.

“Casa Valentina’s work over the last 15 years has always put the needs of former foster care and homeless youth at the forefront. This legislation marks a momentous occasion as our State’s most vulnerable population are getting the attention they deserve and tools to exceed, we applaud the work being done by Senator Garcia, Representative Duran, and the entire Florida Legislature,” said Janice M. Graham, CEO of Casa Valentina.

For more information, please visit [www.FLSenate.gov](http://www.FLSenate.gov)

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