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AB 343 (McCarty): Special Immigrant Visa Instate Tuition and Financial Aid Eligibility
FACT SHEET

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ISSUE

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have displaced many families, causing many to flee their homes in search of a better life. During the wars, many Afghani and Iraqi nationals have assisted or were employed by the U.S. government as translators or advisors. Under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006, certain Afghani and Iraqi nationals were provided special immigrant status in the U.S.. Through the end of 2015, more than 37,000 individuals were granted special immigrant visa (SIV) status under this program.

A SIV is granted to a special immigrant who qualifies for a green card (permanent residence) under the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) special immigrant program. In order to apply for this immigration status, an individual must fill out a petition documenting his or her circumstances and submit the petition to USCIS. These applicants go through a thorough application and security screening process.

Recently, a large number of refugees and individuals with SIVs have come to California. The largest numbers of refugees are in the counties of Monterey, San Diego, and Sacramento. As of 2016, Sacramento County welcomed 3,261 refugees. Many of these families have escaped war and persecution in order to improve the lives of their family, but encounter numerous barriers when assimilating into the U.S. such as the cost of higher education.

Tuition and fees vary for California resident students and nonresident students depending on the segment. Current tuition and fees at the University of California for resident students is \$12,294 and a nonresident is \$38,976 a year. At the California State University, full time resident students pay \$5,472 and nonresident students pay the full time resident tuition and an additional \$254 per unit. California Community Colleges, resident students pay \$46 per unit and nonresident fees are determined by the district, but the statewide average is \$234 per unit.

SOLUTION

Nonresident students who meet specified criteria are exempt from out of state rates for tuition/fee purposes. However, individuals who are granted a SIV are not eligible. This bill would extend eligibility to refugees with SIVs for in-state tuition/fees and state financial aid programs.

AB 343 provide individuals with SIVs access to higher education by extending instate tuition and eligibility for state-administered financial aid programs, including Cal Grant awards, UC and CSU institutional aid, and CCC Board of Governors fee waivers. This bill would ensure that these students are able to pursue their education, rebuild, and improve their lives and the lives of their family.

SUPPORT

Niles Sisters Development Initiative

(As introduced/amended DATE)