

Date of Hearing: March 27, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

David Chiu, Chair

AB 58 (Luz Rivas) – As Introduced December 3, 2018

SUBJECT: Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council

SUMMARY: Adds a representative of the California Department of Education (CDE) to the state Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the HCFC to be chaired by the Secretary of Business, Consumer Services, and Housing made up of the following members or their representatives:
 - a) A representative from the Department of Transportation;
 - b) A representative from the Department of Housing and Community Development;
 - c) A representative of the State Department of Social Services;
 - d) A representative of the California Housing Finance Agency;
 - e) A representative of the State Department of Health Care Services;
 - f) A representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs;
 - g) A representative of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation;
 - h) A representative from the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee in the Treasurer's office;
 - i) A representative of the Victim Services Program within the Division of Grants Management within the Office of Emergency Services;
 - j) A formerly homeless person who lives in California;
 - k) A formerly homeless youth who lives in California;
 - l) Two representatives of local agencies or organizations that participate in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Continuum of Care Program;
 - m) State advocates or other members of the public or state agencies, at the Governor's discretion; and
 - n) An appointee of the Senate Committee on Rules and the Speaker of the Assembly
- 2) Sets the following goals for the HCFC:
 - a) To identify mainstream resources, benefits, and services that can be accessed to prevent and end homelessness in California;
 - b) To create partnerships among state and federal agencies and departments, local government agencies, and nonprofit entities working to end homelessness, homeless services providers, and the private sector, for the purpose of arriving at specific strategies to end homelessness;
 - c) To promote systems integration to increase efficiency and effectiveness while focusing on designing systems to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age;

- d) To coordinate existing funding and applications for competitive funding, without restructuring or changing any existing allocations or allocation formulas;
 - e) To make policy and procedural recommendations to legislators and other governmental entities;
 - f) To identify and seek funding opportunities for state entities that have programs to end homelessness and to facilitate and coordinate those state entities' efforts to obtain that funding;
 - g) To broker agreements between state agencies and departments and between state agencies and departments and local jurisdictions to align and coordinate resources, reduce administrative burdens of accessing existing resources, and foster common applications for services, operating, and capital funding;
 - h) To serve as a statewide facilitator, coordinator, and policy development resource on ending homelessness in California;
 - i) To report to the Governor, federal Cabinet members, and the Legislature on homelessness and work to reduce homelessness; and
 - j) To ensure accountability and results in meeting the strategies and goals of the council.
- 3) Requires, after July 1, 2017, agencies and departments that implement funds, or administer a program that provides housing or housing-based services to people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness, with the exception of federally funded programs not consistent with housing first or programs that fund emergency shelters, to work with the state HCFC to adopt guidelines and regulations to incorporate core components of Housing First.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Purpose of this bill: According to the author, "currently, the more than 200,000 homeless students in California account for nearly 4 percent of the total public school population. This bill would give the CDE, who oversees and coordinates the homeless liaisons (LEA) tasked with identifying and assisting homeless students at every LEA, a seat at the table, the bill will help the HCFC accomplish its objective of combating homelessness. Per the federal McKinney-Vento Act, which is implemented by CDE, schools are often the first points of contact to identify interface with, and assist homeless students and families. However, CDE is not a member of the HCFC."

Background: California is facing a homelessness and affordable housing crisis. In 2018, on a single night in January, 129,972 people experienced homelessness in California. California has twenty-four percent of the people in the nation experiencing homelessness. Nearly half of all unsheltered people in the country were in California. Although the number of people experiencing homelessness decreased slightly since 2017, the overall number of people experiencing homelessness has risen over five percent since 2010.

The homeless crisis is driven by the lack of affordable rental housing for lower income people. In the current market, 2.2 million extremely low-income and very low-income renter households are competing for 664,000 affordable rental units. Of the six million renter households in the state, 1.7 million are paying more than 50% of their income toward rent. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that the state needs an additional 1.5 million housing units affordable to very-low income Californians.

Homeless youth: On a single night in January 2018, there were approximately 36,361 unaccompanied homeless youth under the age of 25, which represents between 7% and 10% of people experiencing homelessness as individuals. A homeless youth is defined as a minor younger than 18 or a young adult between 18 and 24 years old who is living independently without shelter. Homelessness among youth differs from homelessness among adults and families with children, and can often include sleeping on the streets, living in cars, living in shelters, or couch surfing – which refers to the practice of moving between temporary living arrangements, often a friend or family member’s couch, without a secure place to live. One in 30 adolescent minors between ages 13 and 17 experiences homelessness in a year, and roughly 25% involves couch surfing only. Due to increased susceptibility to exploitation and violence, homeless youth may develop substance use issues or engage in survival sex in order to find shelter or food.

LEAs: School districts, county offices of education, and charter schools – are required by the McKinney-Vento Act and by state law to identify homeless students enrolled in their schools and to provide them certain rights and supportive services. These rights include access to preschool; immediate enrollment without regard to immunization and other records; access to district-funded transportation services; exemption from certain local graduation requirements; the right to a fifth year of high school, if needed; and credit for partial coursework, among others. However, these rights and services are only granted once a designated McKinney-Vento liaison, teacher, or other district or school site employee has affirmatively identified a student as homeless.

As recently as 2017, over a quarter of California schools – about 2,700 of 10,500 schools – reported that they had identified no homeless students at all, and as a result provided no McKinney-Vento services. The largest of these include high schools with total enrollment over 2,500 students. According to the California Department of Education, at the district level, 400 districts statewide have reported enrolling zero homeless students.

HCFC: In 2016, SB 1380 (Mitchell), Chapter 847, created the HCFC to coordinate the state's response to homelessness. SB 1380 required all state agencies or departments that operate programs that provide housing or housing-related services to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to adopt guidelines and regulations to include Housing First policies. In 2017, SB 918 (Wiener), Chapter 841 expanded the role of the HCFC to add a focus on homeless youth by requiring the HCFC to set and measure progress towards goals to prevent and end homelessness among youth in California. The HCFC meets every quarter.

In 2018, the HCFC was tasked with administering the Homeless Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP) to provide localities with flexible block grant funds to address their immediate homelessness challenges. To qualify to receive funds, a city, county or joint powers authority must declare a shelter crisis and a CoC must demonstrate collaboration with the city and county.

Funding can be used for emergency housing vouchers, rapid re-housing, construction of emergency shelters, among other uses.

The Homeless Emergency Aid Block Grants provide \$500 million in one-time funding to enable local governments to respond to homelessness. Allocations are as follows:

- \$250 million to Continuums of Care based on 2017 homeless point in time count;
- \$150 million direct allocation to a city or county that is also a county with a population of 330,000 or more as of January 1, 2018; and
- \$100 million to Continuums of Care based on their percentage of the statewide 2017 homeless population.

Housing First Approach: Housing First is an evidence-based housing model that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible and then providing services as needed. A core component of Housing First includes a tenant screening process that promotes accepting applicants regardless of their sobriety or use of substances, completion of treatment, or participation in services. This model recognizes that an individual experiencing homelessness should be provided shelter and stability before underlying issues can be successfully tackled. The housing first model is contrasted with a model known as “housing readiness,” which is exhibited in some transitional housing models. This model requires homeless people to earn their way into transitional housing and make progress on certain goals; when they are deemed well enough; they earn their spot in permanent housing. The Federal government through the leadership of the US Interagency Council of Homelessness has successfully integrated the housing first approach into programs at the federal level.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Alternative Payment Program Association
California Coalition for Youth
California School Employees Association
City of Santa Monica
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Housing California
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California
Shelter Partnership
Southern California Association of NonProfit Housing
Union Station Homeless Services

Opposition

None on file.

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