

Date of Hearing: March 11, 2020

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

David Chiu, Chair

AB 1845 (Luz Rivas) – As Introduced January 6, 2020

SUBJECT: Homelessness: Office to End Homelessness

SUMMARY: Establishes the Governor’s Office to End Homelessness under the direction of the Secretary of Housing Insecurity and Homelessness. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the Governor’s Office to End Homelessness to be housed in the Governor’s office.
- 2) Requires the Governor to appoint a Secretary of Housing Insecurity and Homelessness and places the Office to End Homelessness under the direct control of the Secretary.
- 3) Provides that the primary purpose of the Governor’s Office to End Homelessness is to coordinate homelessness services, data, and policies between federal, local, and state agencies.
- 4) Moves the Homelessness Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) from the Business Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) into the Governor’s Office to End Homelessness.
- 5) Replaces the Secretary of BCSH as chair of the HCFC with the Secretary of Housing and Insecurity and Homelessness.
- 6) Moves all of the staff and resources from the HCFC from BCSH and into the Governor’s Office to End Homelessness.
- 7) Requires the Governor’s Office to End Homelessness to do all of the following:
 - a) Advise the Governor on ways to advance statewide homelessness prevention through a need-gap analysis;
 - b) Convene staff from state agencies and departments that provide services to those experiencing homelessness to develop universal guidelines and standards for providing those services;
 - c) Coordinate the standardization of housing and services to people experiencing homelessness using evidence-based approaches;
 - d) Establish a process for agencies and departments to identify, assist, and track individuals leaving state-funded institutions that are at risk of homelessness;
 - e) Fund housing navigation for people at risk of homelessness upon discharge from state-funded institutions;
 - f) Develop a universal application for individuals, developers, and other entities to apply for funding from the state for homelessness services, funding, and housing.

- g) Issue funding to address homelessness to local agencies through a unified funding application in consideration of the timing of similar federal funding;
 - h) Examine and promote racially equitable policies for departments and agencies that provide housing and services to people experiencing homelessness; and,
 - i) Accept monetary donations or other donations from businesses; nonprofit organizations, or individuals to encourage innovation in ending homelessness and providing housing and other services.
- 8) Requires the Governor's Office to End Homelessness to coordinate with state agencies and departments to reduce the risk of long-term homelessness by developing procedures and protocols that do all of the following:
- a) Connect domestic violence survivors that are exiting shelters and transitional housing to housing navigators and rental assistance programs;
 - b) Assist individuals reentering communities from jails and prisons with housing navigation and obtaining permanent housing;
 - c) Connect older adults with services that assist independent living and other wrap around and personal care services;
 - d) Provide high-cost and high-acuity health users, with housing and services to avoid homelessness; and,
 - e) Create local processes that make child welfare services available to unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness.
- 9) States the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to establish a funders collaborative administered by the Governor's Office to End Homelessness.
- 10) Requires a state agency or department that administers a program that is required to be a Housing First program to provide the HCFC with any relevant information regarding the program.

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:

Author's statement: According to the author, “increasing housing costs and stagnating incomes have been the main drivers that cause individuals to fall into homelessness. To help alleviate those pressures, the Legislature and Governor has allocated significant resources in response to the growing crisis. While state funding plays a critical role in the fight against homelessness, funding alone will not solve systemic issues.

Continued state investments, combined with significant structural changes to how California oversees, coordinates, and delivers its homelessness programs is essential to ensuring that state and local programs are being utilized effectively.”

Background: California is facing a homelessness and affordable housing crisis. In 2019, on a single night in January, 151,278 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. The number of people experiencing homelessness increased by 17 percent from 2018 to 2019.

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.

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. 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. The HCFC was given a list of “goals” to focus on but no clear authority to make changes to state policy or programs that address homelessness.

In 2018, the budget included \$500 million for the Homeless Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP) to provide localities with flexible block grant funds to address their immediate homelessness challenges. The HCFC was tasked with distributing HEAP. Funding can be used for emergency housing vouchers, rapid re-housing, construction of emergency shelters, among other uses. In 2019, the HCFC was allocated \$650 million for the Homelessness Housing, Assistance, and Prevention Program (HHAP) to distribute to local governments – CoCs, counties, and large cities to respond to homelessness. HHAP is similar to HEAP but provides more specificity on how local governments must spending funding and moves away from a priority for emergency shelters and toward permanent housing solutions.

State coordination across homelessness programs: In 2017, the California State Auditor reported the core reason our “homeless population exceeds that of other entities” is due to the fact that “other entities have a single entity charged specifically with addressing homelessness. Furthermore, other entities invest significantly in administering and funding homeless services.”

The Legislative Analyst Office recently commented on the state’s current approach to addressing homelessness by asserting: “[A] fragmented approach creates various challenges. Addressing a problem as complex and interconnected as homelessness requires the involvement of departments and agencies across the state and collaboration among all levels of government and other stakeholders. A fragmented response creates various challenges, including:

- Difficulty tracking all homelessness-related expenditures across the state;
- Difficulty assessing how much the state is spending on a particular approach towards addressing homelessness, for example—prevention versus intervention efforts;
- Difficulty determining how programs work collaboratively; and,
- Difficulty assessing what programs are collectively accomplishing

Staff comments: There are 13 different state agencies and departments administering at least 30 different programs relating to homelessness. The HCFC provides an opportunity to coordinate these programs, but lacks the authority to direct departments and agencies that make up the council to make policy changes to align the state’s resources. In addition, the HCFC is not required to deliver specific outcomes but has a set of goals to guide its work without prioritization. This bill would specify the responsibilities the proposed Governor’s Office to End Homelessness would be required to pursue including creating a uniform application for programs that address homelessness. It’s worth noting, that the Governor could create a new secretary to oversee and direct homeless policies without legislation. However, the bill gives the Legislature an opportunity to direct the efforts of the Secretary and the Governor’s Office to End Homelessness and set priorities for the state’s response to homelessness.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Corporation for Supportive Housing (Co-Sponsor)

Housing California (Co-Sponsor)

American Family Housing

Brilliant Corners

California Apartment Association

California Catholic Conference

California Coalition for Rural Housing

Clifford Beers Housing, INC.

Community Economics, INC.

Community Housing Partnership

Destination: Home

EAH Housing

Homeless Health Care Los Angeles

John Burton Advocates for Youth

LA Family Housing

LeadingAge California
Los Angeles County Office of Education
PATH
St. Joseph Center

Opposition

None on file

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