

Date of Hearing: April 17, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Norma Torres, Chair

AB 998 (Fong) – As Amended: April 8, 2013

SUBJECT: Interagency Council on Homelessness

SUMMARY: Creates the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (council) and requires various state agencies to meet quarterly to coordinate efforts on homelessness. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Makes legislative findings and declarations.
- 2) Defines the following terms:
 - a) “Council” means the California Interagency Council on Homelessness; and
 - b) “Stakeholder organization” means a nonprofit or faith-based organization whose primary mission is to prevent or end homelessness, to provide services or health care to people who are homeless, or to create housing for people who are homeless.
- 3) Creates the council, whose mission is to construct cross-agency and community cooperation in responding to homelessness and to identify and apply for increased federal funding to respond to homelessness.
- 4) Requires the Governor to designate a lead agency or representative from the Governor's staff to direct the council's work.
- 5) Requires the council membership to include:
 - a) At least one representative with decision-making authority from each of the following:
 - i) Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation;
 - ii) Department of Housing and Community Development;
 - iii) Health and Human Services Agency;
 - iv) Department of Social Services; and,
 - v) Department of Veterans Affairs.
 - b) Two representatives from local law enforcement, county or city government, or organizations representing these interests, with one appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules (Senate Rules) and the other by the Speaker of the Assembly (Speaker);
 - c) Representatives from two stakeholder organizations, with one to be appointed by Senate Rules and the other by the Speaker;

- d) Two individuals who have experienced homelessness, with one to be appointed by Senate Rules and the other by the Speaker; and,
 - e) A chair and vice-chair, to be appointed by the Governor.
- 6) Requires the council to:
- a) Meet quarterly;
 - b) Seek all available funding to fund the council and its activities;
 - c) Operate within the current budget of each department and agency represented, as specified. Each department and agency shall cooperate with the council and furnish it with information and assistance that is necessary or useful pursuant to this bill; and,
 - d) Serve without compensation, except that consumer representatives shall receive minimal compensation if private funds are available.
- 7) Authorizes the council to:
- a) Act as the lead for coordinating and planning the state's response to homelessness if necessary as a requirement to apply for federal funding;
 - b) Establish working groups, task forces, or other structures to assist in its work, within current costs or with private support;
 - c) Engage or accept the services of agency personnel and nonprofit organizations, or employ council staff with private or non-state funding; and,
 - d) Invite stakeholders to participate in meetings or provide information to the council.

EXISTING LAW tasks several agencies with responsibilities related to homelessness.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

California has the largest population of persons experiencing homelessness of any state in the country. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reported that on a single night in 2008, California communities counting people living on the streets or in shelters reported a total of 157,277 homeless persons. Over 380,000 people are homeless for some period of time during the course of each year in California. The state has one of the highest rates of homelessness, with one in every 230 residents homeless at any point in time, and one in every 95 residents homeless at some point during the course of a year. In the rest of the country, most homeless people are sheltered, temporarily living in shelters or in transitional housing. In California, 70 percent of homeless people live unsheltered, the largest percentage in the nation.

Purpose of this bill: According to one of the co-sponsors of this bill, "the State of California continues to have a fragmented approach in dealing with homelessness. The state lacks coordination between state agencies, local government, and non-profit organizations. AB 998 will establish an Interagency Council on Homelessness in the state consisting of representatives from multiple jurisdictions. California is the only large state not to have an active Interagency Council on Homelessness. The purpose of this council is to improve efficiency, streamline resources, create better coordination, and provide a forum where information and ideas can be discussed and shared.

An active agency comprised of state and local representatives will create an innovative perspective to streamline resources, improve efficiency, reduce duplication, create greater accountability from state government, and generate federal funding. The Interagency Council on Homelessness will improve state systems by coordinating between state and local governments, and the private sector to create an integrated process where proposals and information can be shared to produce cost-effective solutions. Designated personnel at existing agencies who work on homelessness will staff the Council. It is crucial a State Interagency Council be established through multi-agency and community cooperation to create effectual and supportive methods to address, and possibly end, homelessness in the State of California."

California is one of only a handful of states that does not have an interagency council on homelessness. More than 10 California agencies administer programs affecting homelessness. Agency collaboration on homelessness has yielded very successful outcomes in California including a 100% decrease in homelessness among participants in the Mental Health Services Act Housing Program. Yet, too often, program requirements administered by one agency conflict with program requirements administered by another or replicate efforts of agency staff. For these reasons, California's approach to homelessness is siloed, sometimes inefficient, and frequently inconsistent.

The health, personal, and economic challenges that chronically homeless individuals and families face and the lack of effective, coordinated services to address these problems often lead to a vicious cycle of housing instability and health deterioration. Health conditions of those experiencing long-term homelessness often prevent housing stability, while persistent homelessness impedes access to needed health and employment services. Consequently, people who are chronically homeless cycle through costly emergency-driven public systems – emergency shelters, emergency rooms, detoxification centers, criminal justice facilities – without getting the ongoing care they need to address severe mental illness, substance abuse disorders, or chronic health conditions. People who experience multiple episodes of homelessness, who are chronically homeless, or who frequently use avoidable crisis services use a disproportionate share of public resources.

Policy academy to reduce chronic homelessness: In the fall of last year, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) received a technical assistance grant from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) to participate in a Policy Academy to reduce the prevalence of chronic homelessness, sponsored jointly by several U.S. ICH member agencies. California was one of just nine states invited to apply, and four were selected for participation. The Policy Academy is intended to bring together a team of federal and state experts and practitioners with a focus on short-term actions that can impact chronic homelessness in the state. Over the next several months, the Policy Academy intends to learn from successful state and local efforts and practices and to explore new opportunities for

collaboration, coordination and innovation. The initial focus of the Policy Academy is on state investment and coordination strategies and partnerships and actions that do the following:

- Increase access to permanent supportive housing by persons experiencing chronic homelessness;
- Leverage and incentivize local crisis response systems moving toward permanent housing, rapid re-housing, and targeted engagement; and
- Increase access and impact of mainstream resources, particularly given healthcare reform, both within permanent supportive housing and for individuals still living on the streets.

Previous legislation: In 2011, AB 1167 (Fong), which was largely identical to this bill, was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Corporation for Supportive Housing (co-sponsor)
Housing California (co-sponsor)
A Community of Friends
California Catholic Conference of Bishops
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Desert Manna
First Place for Youth
Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor
Homeward Bound of Marin
Larkin Street Youth Services
Mutual Housing California
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California
PATH San Diego
Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee
Tenderloin Neighborhood Development
United Homeless Healthcare Partners
Western Center on Law & Poverty
Yolo Community Care Continuum

Opposition

None on file.

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