

Date of Hearing: April 27, 2011

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Norma Torres, Chair

AB 1167 (Fong) – As Amended: April 4, 2011

SUBJECT: Homelessness: 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) Department of Mental Health;
 - 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 be 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 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 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 homeless persons 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. HUD estimated the total number of homeless adults in the nation on one night as 1,283,272. In the rest of the country, most homeless people are

sheltered, temporarily living in shelters or transitional housing. In California, 70 percent of homeless people live unsheltered, the largest percentage in the nation.

According to the sponsor, "California has the largest homeless population in the nation but 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.

Previous Legislation. AB 1177 (Fong) of 2009 is a similar bill that would have required various state agencies to meet quarterly to coordinate efforts on homelessness. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee. This bill differs from AB 1177 by revising the council membership and its appointments and reducing the council's mandated actions.

Federal efforts to coordinate delivery of services to the homeless:

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness is made up of 19 agencies that developed and adopted "Opening Doors" a Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness. The Plan includes 10 objectives and 52 strategies to achieve the goal of ending homelessness." The plan is a model for states Interagency Councils on Homelessness to follow in developing strategies to end homelessness by coordinating and leveraging resources. With a Council, California will be better positioned to respond to the federal agenda to end homelessness and draw down on possible federal funding.

One example of interagency collaboration at the federal level is the partnerships between HUD and the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program. The partnership provides long-term case management, supportive services and permanent housing support to veterans. Eligible homeless veterans receive VA-provided case management and supportive services to maintain stability and recovery from physical and mental health, substance use, and concerns contributing to or resulting from homelessness. In 2010, HUD provided 20,000 "Housing Choice" Section 8 vouchers, of which 2,905 have been awarded to California for HUD-VASH to participating Public Housing Authorities to assist with rent payment. In FY 2010, Congress authorized an additional 10,000 vouchers for a total of 30,000.

Goals for the program include promoting veteran recovery and independent to sustain permanent housing in the community for the veteran and the veteran's family.

Arguments in Support. The co-sponsor, Housing California, writes, "In light of the deep budget cuts the Legislature has made to our state's safety net programs, a council whose chief purpose would be to increase efficiency of our remaining resources and identify new options for federal funding that could total in the millions now seems more important than ever. A council is a wise investment at a time when economic hardships and budget cuts could result in additional homelessness. Because California has the largest homeless population in the country, the state needs strategic, thoughtful approaches driven by practices that work. Currently, the 11 state agencies that administer programs affecting homelessness in California often administer conflicting programmatic philosophies, or duplicate staff effort."

According to the City of Santa Monica, "While local governments are taking the lead to address homelessness on the ground, [local governments] are constantly hampered by conflicting regulations and policies that vary across state and local agencies. As a state that is home to the largest concentrations of homelessness, including homeless veterans, it is critical that resources and responses are coordinated at the state level."

Double referred: The Assembly Committee on Rules referred AB 1167 to the Committee on Business, Professions and Consumer Protection and Housing and Community Development. The bill passed the Committee on Business, Professions and Consumer Protection of April 12, 2011, by a vote of 6 to 0.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Corporation for Supportive Housing (co-sponsor)
Housing California (so-sponsor)
County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors
United Homeless Healthcare Partners

Opposition

None on file.

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