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Senate Bill 918 – Homeless Youth Act of 2018

PROBLEM

California has the highest rate of youth homelessness in the nation – 38 percent of the nation’s total. In 2017, there were 15,458 unaccompanied homeless youth in California without a safe place to call home. This includes youth ages 12 to 24 who were living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, on the street, or in other places not intended for human habitation.

The state’s investment in programs to support young people is woefully inadequate. At the last statewide survey, only 20 of California’s 58 counties had direct services for homeless youth. Yet unique services are needed for this population.

Solving youth homelessness is a critical part of ending California’s larger crisis because young people who experience homelessness are five times more likely than their peers to become homeless adults. Yet California lacks a clear strategy to prevent and end homelessness among young people in the state. Policy and funding are scattered across various state agencies and departments.

- Coordinate with young people experiencing homelessness, appropriate state entities and other stakeholders to inform policy, practices and programs.

The bill establishes \$60 million in grants from the cannabis tax and other funds, administered by the Office of Homeless Youth, to do the following:

- Provide rental assistance; non-time-limited supportive housing; transitional housing; rapid re-housing; host homes; and shelters for homeless minors and youth.
- Provide drug abuse prevention; mental and physical health care; transitional living services; education and employment assistance; and family support.
- Demonstrate cultural sensitivity to various groups, including youth who are LGBT, and have disproportionately high rates of homelessness.
- Prioritize funding for agencies that work with their local continuum of care organizations and otherwise coordinate with local and state youth-serving organizations.

SOLUTION

This bill creates the Office of Homeless Youth within the Department of Housing and Community Development and requires it to set specific goals to prevent and end youth homelessness in California, and to monitor progress toward those goals. The bill also requires the Office to:

- Assess system gaps and report them to the Legislature.
- Provide technical assistance to jurisdictions, particularly those without existing programs to serve homeless youth.
- Coordinate efforts to prevent homelessness among youth who were involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

SUPPORT

Co-Sponsors:

- California Coalition for Youth
- Corporation for Supportive Housing
- Equality California
- Housing California
- John Burton Advocates for Youth
- Tipping Point

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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