

Date of Hearing: April 9, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 1817 (Alanis) – As Amended March 18, 2024

SUBJECT: Homeless youth

SUMMARY: Adds the following to the responsibility of the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (CalICH) to set and measure:

- 1) Decrease the number of young people experiencing homelessness in the state who struggle with food insecurity.
- 2) Decrease the unemployment rate among young people experiencing homelessness by increasing access to employment opportunities and economic stability.

EXISTING LAW:

State law:

- 1) Establishes the Cal-ICH formerly known as the "Homelessness Coordinating and Financing Council" (HCFC), to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Housing First guidelines and regulations in California and identify resources and services that can be accessed to prevent and end homelessness in California. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] § 8255 *et seq.*)
- 2) Defines the core components of Housing First to include tenant screening and selection practices that promote accepting applicants regardless of their sobriety or use of substances, completion of treatment, or participation in services, and offers services that are informed by a harm-reduction philosophy, where tenants are engaged in nonjudgmental communication regarding drug and alcohol use, and where tenants are offered education regarding how to avoid risky behaviors and engage in safer practices, as well as connected to evidence-based treatment if the tenant so chooses. (WIC § 8255(b))
- 3) Establishes homeless youth emergency service pilot projects in the City of Los Angeles, and the City and County of San Francisco to provide services to homeless minors. (WIC § 13700)
- 4) Requires homeless youth projects to provide services that include, but are not limited to, food and access to an overnight shelter, counseling to address immediate emotional crises or problems, and linkage to other services offered by public and private agencies, among others. (WIC § 13701)

Federal law:

- 5) Defines in federal law homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons; children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and migratory children, as specified, who qualify as homeless because the children are living in certain circumstances. (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 11301 *et seq.*)

- 6) Establishes the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness to coordinate a federal response to homelessness and create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to end homelessness. (42 U.S.C. § 11311)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, this bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

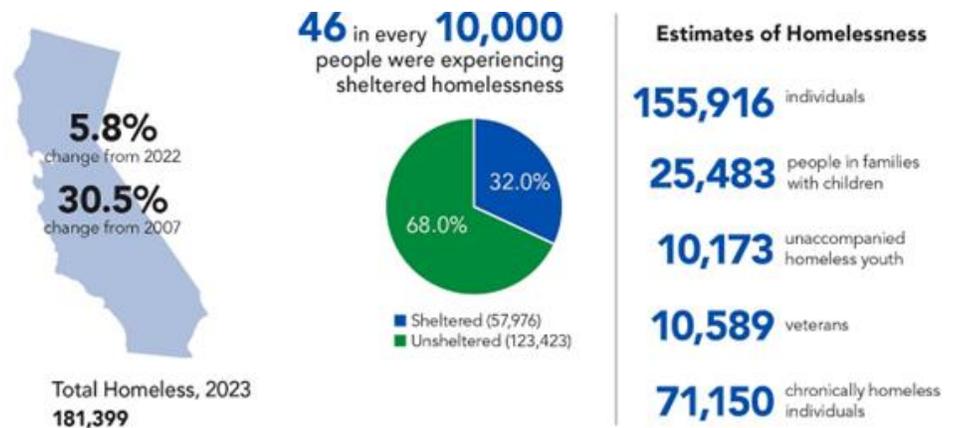
COMMENTS:

Background: *California Interagency Council on Homelessness*, formerly known as HCFC, was established in 2017 through the enactment of SB 1380 (Mitchell), Chapter 847, Statutes of 2016, as a way to coordinate the state’s response to homelessness and to oversee the implementation of “Housing First” policies, guidelines, and regulations to reduce the prevalence and duration of homelessness in California. Additionally, Cal-ICH, through SB 918 (Wiener), Chapter 841, Statutes of 2018, established the Homeless Youth Act of 2018 to serve the state’s homeless youth population better and required HCFC to take on additional related responsibilities focused on addressing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

“Housing First” means the evidence-based model that uses housing as a tool, rather than a reward, for recovery and that centers on providing or connecting homeless people to permanent housing as quickly as possible. Housing First providers offer services as needed and requested voluntarily and do not make housing contingent on participation in services. Programs offering time-limited, supportive services serving homeless youth under 25 years of age are encouraged to use a positive youth development model that is culturally competent to work with the youth to engage in family reunification efforts, where appropriate and when in the best interest of the youth.

This bill adds to CalICH’s current requirements to also focus on employment and food insecurity.

Homelessness in California. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducts an annual report using data from local Continuums of Care (CoCs), known as the Point in Time (PIT) count. CoCs



provide data to HUD regarding the number of individuals experiencing homelessness on any given night, including individuals experiencing homelessness who are "sheltered" and living in temporary shelters and those who are "unsheltered" or living out in the open.

In the 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), HUD found 181,399 individuals experiencing homelessness lived in California, and 123,423 of those were unsheltered. This is a large increase from the 2022 report which captured 145,983 individuals experiencing homelessness lived in California, and of those, 111,206 were unsheltered.

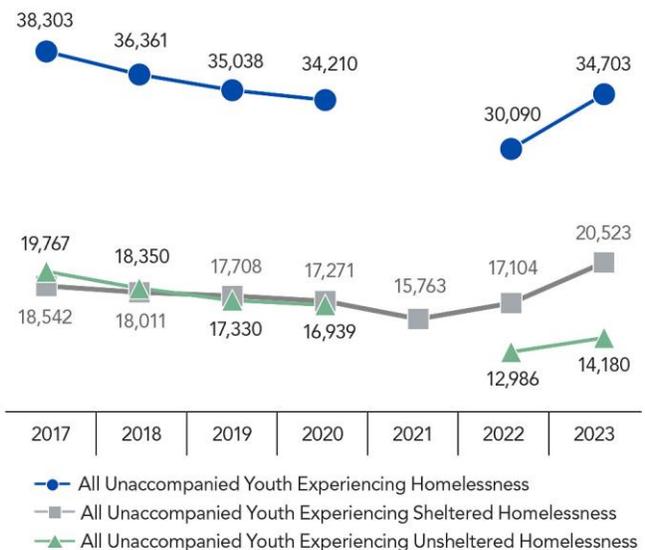
According to the AHAR, in five California major city CoCs more than 70% of people experiencing homelessness were unsheltered: San Jose (75%), Los Angeles (73%), Oakland (73%), Long Beach (72%), and Sacramento (72%). Comparably, CoCs with the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness were Jackson, Tennessee (91%); Hendry, Hardee, and Highlands Counties, which are located to the north and west of Lake Okeechobee in Florida (88%); and Chattanooga, Tennessee (85%).

The impacts of homelessness are substantial and lasting. Housing insecurity is correlated with adverse health effects, including high rates of chronic disease, illness, and a broad range of mental health and substance use issues. The health, personal, and economic challenges that homeless individuals have and the lack of coordinated services to address these problems often lead to a cycle of housing instability and health deterioration. These compounded factors only make it more difficult to exit homelessness and create barriers to the resources necessary for self-sufficiency.

Youth Experiencing Homelessness. Federal law referred to as the McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Children and youth who may be living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, shelters
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings, or
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are children who are living in similar circumstances listed above.

PIT Estimates of Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness



Based on the PIT, 34,703 unaccompanied youth were experiencing homelessness in the United States. California accounted for more than a fourth (10,173) of the national number. Of that number, 955 were unsheltered. Overall, youth experiencing homelessness continues to grow with the overall increase. California had a 583 increase in homeless youth in 2023.

Racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the homeless youth population, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, and other non-cisgender identities and sexualities (LGBTQ+) youth. An August 2014 report by the UCLA School of Law found that LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness were reported to have been homeless

longer than non-LGBTQ+ youth and were reported to be in worse mental and physical health than non-LGBTQ youth. Between 5% and 10% of the general youth population identifies as LGBTQ+; however, LGBTQ+ youth comprise between 20% and 40% of the homeless youth population. The reasons for these dramatic numbers are complex and include inequities such as housing and employment discrimination, among other systemic issues slated against the LGBTQ+ community. The following table is a breakdown of the Demographic Characteristics of Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness by the AHAR:

		All Unaccompanied Youth		Sheltered Unaccompanied Youth		Unsheltered Unaccompanied Youth	
Total		34,703	100%	20,523	100%	14,180	100%
Age	Under 18	3,240	9.3%	1,732	8.4%	1,508	10.6%
	18 to 24	31,463	90.7%	18,791	91.6%	12,672	89.4%
	Female	13,176	38%	8,215	40%	4,961	35%
	Male	19,875	57.3%	11,300	55.1%	8,575	60.5%
Gender	Transgender	719	2.1%	466	2.3%	253	1.8%
	A Gender that is not Singularly 'Female' or 'Male'	776	2.2%	473	2.3%	303	2.1%
	Questioning	157	0.5%	69	.3%	88	0.6%
Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic/Non-Latin(a)(o)(x)	24,207	69.8%	14,509	70.7%	9,698	68.4%
	Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x)	10,496	30.2%	6,014	29.3%	4,482	31.6%
Race	American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	1,721	5.0%	759	3.7%	962	6.8%
	Asian or Asian American	648	1.9%	270	1.3%	378	2.7%
	Black, African American, or African	12,441	35.8%	8,981	43.8%	3,460	24.4%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	479	1.4%	182	0.9%	297	2.1%
	White	17,012	49%	9,130	44.5%	7,882	55.6%
	Multiple Races	2,402	6.9%	1,201	5.9%	1,201	8.5%

Food Insecurity for Young Adults. For low-income individuals, the cost of food can push someone over the edge into homelessness. The California Health Interview Survey conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles reported, “According to the 2022 data, a growing number of low-income Californian adults (earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level) struggled to access nutritious and affordable food: 44% were not able to afford enough food in 2022, up from 35.8% in 2020.” According to the Consumer Price Index for Food, in 2022, food prices increased by 9.9%, faster than any year since 1979; and in 2023, food prices increased by 5.8%. As the price of housing and food continues to rise, this puts those at risk of homelessness in jeopardy.

This bill requires an existing body to examine how to decrease the number of young people experiencing homelessness in the state who struggle with food insecurity.

Author’s Statement: According to the Author, “AB 1817 would update the Homeless Youth Act of 2018 to establish a more extensive list of goals that includes not only shelter, but an emphasis on food security and economic stability as well. These additional goals reflect the struggles that homeless youth have experienced increasingly over time, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. It is time for California to take a more comprehensive approach to the youth homelessness crisis by adding goals related to food security and employment opportunities to end youth homelessness once and for all.”

Equity Implications: As outlined above, youth at-risk of homelessness are disproportionately LGBTQ+ and persons of color. This bill requires CalICH to consider youth when setting and measuring goals. This council is important for understanding barriers and discussing solutions. Youth have a unique set of challenges so parsing out youth challenges may help strategically prioritize their needs.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 918 (Wiener), Chapter 841, Statutes of 2018, established the Homeless Youth Act of 2018 and added responsibilities and measurable goals aimed at preventing and ending homelessness among youth in the state and defining outcome measures and gathering data related to those goals to the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council.

SB 1380 (Mitchell), Chapter 847, Statutes of 2016, established the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council to serve as a statewide facilitator, coordinator, and policy development resource on ending homelessness.

AB 998 (Fong and Atkins) of 2013, would have created the “California Interagency Council on Homelessness” to perform various duties, including providing a state plan to respond to homelessness. AB 998 was held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee suspense file.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Alexandria Smith / HUM. S. / (916) 319-2089