

Date of Hearing: January 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 673 (Jackson) – As Amended January 12, 2026

SUBJECT: Unaccompanied homeless pupils: Unaccompanied Youth Transitional Housing Program

SUMMARY: Establishes the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program to provide supports for unaccompanied youth who are 16 and 17 years of age, including connecting youth with resources to find stable housing. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Requires the California Department of Education (CDE), in consultation with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to administer competitive grants for a period of five years as part of a pilot program, to be known as the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program, to local educational agencies (LEAs) to improve school attendance, student engagement, graduation rates, and wellbeing for unaccompanied youth.
- 2) Specifies that eligible grant funds include:
 - a) Authorizing school staff to support connections and establish referrals to existing structures including, county welfare departments, foster care placement options, Youth Homelessness Prevention Centers administered by CDSS, local continuums of care (CoCs), Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs, homeless education liaisons, and other related services, with an emphasis on finding stable housing options for the students served by this grant;
 - b) Providing provisions of basic needs supports, including items such as clothing, food, and stipends for transportation;
 - c) Providing educational support services and tutoring provided directly by LEAs or through a partner nonprofit or service provider;
 - d) Providing employment readiness and skills development, including skills related to independent living; and,
 - e) Supporting connections and establishing referrals to health, behavioral health, and other supportive services.
- 3) Requires CDE, when awarding grants to LEAs, to prioritize grants for applications that demonstrate significant experience working with unaccompanied youth and existing partnerships with county welfare departments, CoCs, nonprofits working on youth homelessness, and other related services.
- 4) Requires LEAs seeking to receive a grant under the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program to submit an application in the form and matter prescribed by CDE and to include all the following information:
 - a) A description of the LEA;

- b) A description of existing partnerships between the LEA and other agencies or organizations to support unaccompanied youth, as applicable; and,
- c) A detailed plan describing how grant funds will be used to identify eligible students, the types of supports to be provided based on the eligible uses of grant funds, and the methods and metrics LEAs will use to measure progress toward program goals.

- 5) Permits CDE to establish additional application requirements or criteria necessary to ensure effective program administration, accountability, and equitable geographic distribution of grant awards consistent with the purpose and the eligible grant uses.
- 6) Requires LEAs to submit annual reports to CDE, in the form and manner as prescribed by CDE, describing the expenditure of funds, the number and characteristics of unaccompanied youth served, the services and housing provided, and measurable outcomes related to housing stability, school attendance, and educational attainment.
- 7) Requires CDE, upon completion of the five-year grant cycle, to submit a report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature, evaluating program outcomes and recommending whether the program should be expanded or made permanent.
- 8) Permits CDE to implement this program through management bulletins or similar letters of instruction.
- 9) Establishes the following definitions:
 - a) “Local educational agency” means a school district, county office of education, or charter school;
 - b) “Nonprofit” means a nonprofit public benefit corporation; and,
 - c) “Unaccompanied youth” means a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

EXISTING LAW:

State law:

- 1) Establishes the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal ICH) to coordinate existing funding, applications for funding, and to create partnerships among state agencies and departments, local government agencies, federal agencies, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, nonprofit entities working to end homelessness, homeless services providers, and the private sector, for the purpose of arriving at specific strategies to end homelessness. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] §§ 8255-8257.3)
- 2) Establishes the Homeless Youth Act of 2018 which requires Cal ICH to set and measure progress toward goals to prevent and end homelessness among youth in California. (WIC §§ 8259-8261)
- 3) Establishes homeless youth prevention centers as a community care facility licensing category under CDSS. Authorizes youth to receive shelter and services from such centers

with a maximum allowable stay of up to 90 consecutive days. (Health and Safety Code § 1502.35)

Federal law:

- 4) Defines a “continuum of care” as the group organized to carry out the responsibilities specified by federal law related to coordinating housing and services, funding of homeless individuals and families, and comprises organizations, including nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social services providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons, to the extent that these groups are represented within the geographic area and are available to participate. (24 Code of Federal Regulations 578.3)
- 5) Defines “homeless children and youths” under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to mean individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals; 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 who qualify as homeless, as specified. (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 11434a (2)).
- 6) Specifies, under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, “unaccompanied youth” include a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. (42 U.S.C. § 11434a (6)).

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

COMMENTS: This analysis only discusses policy issues germane to the jurisdiction of the Assembly Committee on Human Services.

Background: *Youth Homelessness and Unaccompanied Youth.* While California’s overall homeless population has generally increased year over year, according to the national homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) count, youth homelessness in California declined by 24% between 2019 and 2024. The PIT count is a survey mandated by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development as a condition for CoCs to receive federal funding. The 2024 California PIT count identified a total of 9,902 homeless youth under 24 years of age, of which approximately 544 were unaccompanied minors. The reduction in the youth homeless population has been widely attributed to recent state investments to specifically address this population. Building on that momentum, *this bill* seeks to address the cohort of homeless youth who are between 16 and 17 years of age and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, also known as unaccompanied youth.

While the PIT count is an annual survey conducted on a single night in January, LEAs have their own method for identifying and reporting homeless and unaccompanied students and use the

California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) to track this data. When a student is identified by an LEA as homeless as defined under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and is not under the direct care or supervision of a parent or guardian, CALPADS flags that the student is unaccompanied. Estimates provided by CDE for 2023-24 using a cumulative count of all students identified as homeless at any point during the academic year show 8,831 out of 286,853 homeless students are unaccompanied youth. *This bill* would require CDE to administer competitive grants to LEAs for the purpose of providing supports to unaccompanied youth who are 16 and 17 years of age.

Data show that former foster youth are more likely to experience homelessness than their non-foster youth peers. To address their specific needs, current and former foster youth have access to dedicated housing programs that include supervised settings for minors. However, homeless minors without child welfare system-involvement (unaccompanied youth), do not have dedicated housing programs available to them, and this is largely by design, because it is widely accepted policy that minors should not live in a home without a parent or guardian. In fact, the federal government requires living arrangements provided by private or public nonprofit grantees to be adult supervised. Typically, homeless youth who are under 18 years of age (unaccompanied youth) are encouraged to pursue one of three options: to reunite with their parent if safe; to enter foster care if they are not safe to reunite with their parent; or to seek emancipation if appropriate.

Thus, the systems in place to address unaccompanied youth do not include options to formally house these minors in unsupervised settings but rather focus on stabilizing these youth and connecting them with existing systems of care. For example, Youth Homelessness Prevention Centers, formerly referred to as Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelters, serve as an option to temporarily house these vulnerable youth while assessments can be made. These centers focus on preventive care and are designed to serve unaccompanied youth between 12-17 years of age for up to 90 nights. The federal Family and Youth Services Bureau provides grants to fund state, tribal and community projects for runaway and homeless youth and adolescent pregnancy prevention programs that generally offer emergency shelter. *This bill* directs LEAs to use grant funds to assist connecting unaccompanied youth to existing systems and structures such as county welfare departments, Youth Homelessness Prevention Centers, local CoCs, Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs, and homeless education liaisons, with an emphasis on finding stable housing options for the students.

Existing Efforts to Address Youth Homelessness. The California Homeless Youth Project (CHYP) was created in 2007 as an administrative research and policy initiative within the California Research Bureau which falls under the California State Library. CHYP is primarily supported by private grants and provides non-partisan research and data to the Governor and Legislature to help inform state-level decision-making. CHYP's October 2021 publication, California State Action Plan to End Youth Homelessness: 2021 Review contained policy recommendations that were synthesized from prior state action plans to prevent and end youth homelessness. Among the recommendations was to ensure that funding for youth was paired and prioritized with legislative and policy efforts and to provide immediate access to a range of low-barrier crisis housing and services to any youth.

The Homeless Youth Act of 2018 required Cal ICH to set and measure progress toward goals to prevent and end homelessness among youth in California by setting specific, measurable goals, defining outcome measures, and gathering data related to the goals. In 2025, Cal ICH launched a three-year statewide action plan to establish state performance targets that integrated goals to

prevent and end youth homelessness such as permanent, mandated “set-asides” for youth in state-funded programs, and ensuring CoCs maintain youth-specific Coordinated Entry Systems that use specialized assessment tools designed for youth, along with other data collection and accountability measures specifically tailored to homeless youth.

The Act defines “unaccompanied youth” as youth between 12 and 24 years of age who are experiencing homelessness, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The Act also requires Cal ICH to coordinate with young people experiencing homelessness, CDSS, other appropriate state and county agencies and departments, and other stakeholders to inform policy, practices, and programs to coordinate a spectrum of funding, policy, and practice efforts related to young people experiencing homelessness.

According to a November 2025 report by the John Burton Advocates for Youth, Investing in Impact: How State Investment Reduced Youth Homelessness in California:

“As of 2018, there were two youth-specific federal funding sources: The first is the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), established in 1974, which grants funds directly to providers nationwide to operate four programs for youth up to age 21: Basic Center Program (youth shelter), Transitional Living Program, Maternity Group Homes for pregnant and parenting youth, and Street Outreach Program. The second is the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), established in 2016, which is administered to CoCs nationwide to develop and implement a coordinated approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness, serving young people up to age 24.”

To address the lack of state funding for youth homelessness, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-19, Governor Brown established a “youth set-aside” policy within the \$500 million Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) which required at least 5% of HEAP allocations to be dedicated to addressing youth homelessness. This policy continued under Governor Newsom in FY 2019-20 with the establishment of the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention (HHAP) program where the youth set-aside increased in FY 2021-22 to 10%. According to the Homeless Data Integration System, as of July 31, 2025, a total of 50,431 youth have been served through HHAP-funded programs statewide, and of the 23 CoCs that submitted HHAP applications, eight indicated they intend to exceed the required 10% minimum in order to better address youth homelessness.

Effective July 1, 2024, the primary administration of HHAP was transferred from Cal ICH to the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). While Cal ICH remains the policy-setting body, HCD now manages the grant awards (beginning with HHAP Round 5), fiscal compliance, and data tracking. In late 2024, Cal ICH developed a grantee assessment tool for jurisdictions to evaluate their own use of youth-specific funds and ensure compliance with state best practices.

This bill seeks to direct targeted funding to youth who are balancing the rigors of high school with the conditions of homelessness as an unaccompanied youth.

The California Housing and Homelessness Agency (CHHA) was established in 2025 to centralize and coordinate the state’s response to the housing and homelessness crisis. CHHA is scheduled to become fully operational on July 1, 2026, at which point the current Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) will be dissolved and replaced with two newly formed

organizations: CHHA and the Business and Consumer Services Agency. CHHA will oversee HCD, Cal ICH, the California Housing Finance Agency, the Civil Rights Department, and the newly formed Housing Development and Finance Committee.

Notably, Cal ICH will transition from being a budget item under BCSH to a distinct department under CHHA which has the potential to elevate youth homelessness as a long-term state priority within a specialized agency. CHHA will continue to oversee the 10% youth set-aside, with the intention of better aligning this funding with housing production.

Author's Statement: According to the Author, "As the author of [this bill], I am committed to addressing the critical issue of homelessness among unaccompanied youth in California. These vulnerable minors often face significant challenges as they navigate life without the support of a parent or guardian, including limited access to safe housing, education, and essential services. This bill aims to provide a tangible solution by establishing the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program which will offer five-year grants to fund referrals to housing supports, provisions of basic needs, educational supports, employment readiness, and supportive services."

"By implementing this program, we can offer unaccompanied youth the opportunity to rebuild their lives, pursue their education, and contribute to their communities. California cannot afford to ignore the plight of these young people, and it is our responsibility to ensure they have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. I respectfully ask for your support for this critical piece of legislation."

Equity Implications: *This bill* would establish the Unaccompanied Youth Support Grant Program to provide supports for unaccompanied youth who are 16 and 17 years of age, which includes connecting youth with resources to find stable housing. A national study in 2017 conducted by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that certain subpopulations of young people were at higher risk for homelessness, including those who haven't graduated high school; unmarried parenting youth; youth with very low income; LGBTQ+ youth; Black youth; and Latino, non-white youth. While youth homelessness has been reduced as a result of targeted investments, more can be done to help unaccompanied youth who are in high school and struggling with basic needs.

Double referral: This bill was previously heard in the Assembly Committee on Education on January 7, 2025, and was approved on a 7-0 vote.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 1235 (Chu), Chapter 341, Statutes of 2019, changed the name of a community care facility licensing category from "runaway and homeless youth shelter" to "homeless youth prevention center," authorized youth at risk of homelessness and youth exhibiting status offender behavior to receive shelter and services from such centers, and extended the maximum allowable stay at these centers from 21 to 90 consecutive days.

SB 918 (Wiener), Chapter 841, Statutes of 2018, established the Homeless Youth Act of 2018 to better serve the state's homeless youth population and requires Cal ICH to take on additional related responsibilities that are focused on addressing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

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

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Department of Education (Sponsor)
California Apartment Association

Opposition

None on file.

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