

- c) Working to improve the safety, health, and welfare of young people experiencing homelessness in the state.
 - d) Increasing system integration and coordinating efforts to prevent homelessness among youth who are currently or formerly involved in the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system.
 - e) Leading efforts to coordinate a spectrum of funding, policy, and practice efforts related to young people experiencing homelessness.
- 5) Establishes the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) under the HCFC to provide one-time grant funds to address the immediate homelessness challenges of local cities and counties.
- 6) Establishes the Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAPP) under the HCFC to build on HEAP and provide funds to help local jurisdictions combat homelessness.

This bill:

- 1) Creates the TAY Housing Program under the HCFC to create housing for youth under 26 years of age who have been removed from their homes, are experiencing homelessness unaccompanied by a parent or legal guardian, or are under the jurisdiction of a dependency court.
- 2) Creates the TAY Housing Fund, to be continuously appropriated to the HCFC, and appropriates \$100 million from the General Fund to the Fund.
- 3) Requires the HCFC to award grants to eligible organizations for the development of housing for TAY in the form of forgivable deferred loans, as specified. Defines “eligible organization” as a local government agency or a nonprofit corporation that provides, or contracts with community organizations to provide, emergency shelter or transitional housing or both.
- 4) Requires the HCFC to distribute up to \$100 million as expeditiously as possible, as follows:
 - a) At least 47.5% of funds to eligible organizations for projects to house current foster youth between 18-21 years of age. If the HCFC is unable to meet this requirement, it may spend the remaining funds pursuant to (c) below.

- b) No more than 5% for program administration, including state operations and technical assistance.
 - c) The HCFC shall spend remaining funds available to eligible organizations for eligible activities pursuant to this bill.
- 5) Defines “eligible activities” as including but not limited to:
- a) Funding capital development programs such as acquisition, leasing, construction, and rehabilitation of sites for emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for TAY.
 - b) Capital development loans for the conversion of emergency shelter or transitional housing to permanent supportive housing for TAY.
- 6) Requires the HCFC to develop criteria for evaluating applications in a notice of funding availability (NOFA). The HCFC shall give preference to applications from organizations that have experience working with or developing housing projects for TAY.
- 7) Requires the HCFC to terminate a grant award and reallocate the funds if a project has not begun construction within 12 months of the award. Authorizes the HCFC to extend the 12-month period by an additional period of no more than 12 months.
- 8) Requires the HCFC to maintain and make available on its website, records of all of the following:
- a) The number of applications received.
 - b) The number of applications denied.
 - c) The name of each recipient of program funds, as well as any sub-recipients.
 - d) The number of new and converted units created for TAY, by year.

COMMENTS

- 1) *Author’s statement.* “California is simultaneously facing a pandemic, an economic crisis, and a housing crisis, and transition aged youth are struggling with the effects of all three. SB 234 rightfully prioritizes the issue of chronic

youth homelessness and will give kids the footing they need to transition into an independent and successful adult life. Specifically, SB 234 allocates \$100 million for a forgivable loan program to build affordable housing prioritizing our most marginalized youth: those exiting homelessness, exiting foster care, or existing the criminal justice system.”

- 2) *Homelessness in California.* According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, in January 2020 California accounted for more than one-fifth of the nation’s homeless population (28%, or 161,548 people). California also contains more than half of the nation’s unsheltered homeless population (51%, or 113,660 people), including people living in vehicles, abandoned buildings, parks, or on the street. California experienced the largest increase in homelessness in the US, a 6.8% increase over 2019 (10,270 individuals). Los Angeles accounts for the highest number of homeless people in the nation, at 51,290 (followed by New York City at 36,394). In five major metropolitan areas, more than 80% of homeless individuals were unsheltered: San Jose (87%), Los Angeles (84%), Fresno (84%), Oakland (82%), and Long Beach (81%).

While these numbers provide a snapshot of the state’s homeless population, they likely underestimate the scope of the crisis because the HUD point-in-time (PIT) count only measures the homeless population on one day of the year. Moreover, the PIT count does not capture everyone experiencing homelessness, as some do not wish to be counted and others cannot be counted because their location is not known to those counting. People experiencing homelessness face a variety of challenges including food and income insecurity, as well as health problems; the homeless population faces a higher risk of exposure to communicable diseases such as COVID-19, influenza, strep throat, sexually transmitted diseases, Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis, among others.

- 3) *Homeless youth in California.* The HUD PIT count breaks down its data on homelessness to report on specific sub-populations. For each population it reports both sheltered and unsheltered individuals. The chart below summarizes data for 2020 by sub-population:

Breakdown of California’s Homeless PIT Count by Sub-Population (January 2020)	
Total People Experiencing Homelessness	161,548
Individuals	134,981
Families with Children	25,777
Unaccompanied Youth	12,172
Veterans	11,401
Chronically Homeless Individuals	48,723

As the chart shows, in California, 161,548 individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness in January 2020. Of these, about 7% (12,172 individuals) are unaccompanied youth.

- 4) *The HCFC*. The HCFC was created in 2017 (SB 1380, Mitchell, Chapter 847, Statutes of 2016) to oversee the implementation of “Housing First” policies, guidelines, and regulations to reduce the prevalence and duration of homelessness in California. Housing First is an evidence-based model that focuses on the idea that homeless individuals should be provided shelter and stability before underlying issues can be successfully addressed. Housing First utilizes a tenant screening process that promotes accepting applicants regardless of their sobriety, use of substances or participation in services. This approach contrasts to the “housing readiness” model where people are required to address predetermined goals before obtaining housing. The federal government has shifted its focus to Housing First over the last decade, and housing programs under HUD utilize core components of this strategy. Since the implementation of the Housing First model, chronic homelessness in the U.S. experienced a 27% decrease between 2010 and 2016. Housing First was embraced by California in 2015 through SB 1380, which requires all state housing programs to adopt this model.
- 5) *State funding for homeless youth*. For each of the last three years, the state budget has provided significant one-time funding to address youth homelessness through set-asides in larger pots of funding. HEAP, established in 2018, included a minimum 5% set-aside (\$25 million) to address youth homelessness. In 2019 and 2020, HHAP required a minimum 8% (\$24 million and \$52 million, respectively) set-aside for homeless youth. Many jurisdictions across the state have responded by investing even more than the required minimum in homeless youth; a March 2021 study notes that as of September 30, 2020, unaccompanied youth account for 9.2% of the people served by HEAP, and in the first round of HHAP funding, a total 10% of funds were invested in addressing youth homelessness. The Homekey program, however, which does not include a specific set-aside for youth, has thus far awarded less than 1% of its funding to projects explicitly serving youth.¹
- 6) *Why call out youth homelessness?* The Senate Committee on Human Services analysis notes that funding targeted to youth experiencing homelessness, as well as the availability of youth-specific services, is critically important to ending youth homelessness. TAY are unlikely to utilize adult services, for a variety of

¹ Simone Tureck Lee, *A Tale of Two Programs: The Status of Youth During the Rollout of HHAP and Homekey During the Pandemic*. (John Burton Advocates for Youth, March 2021) <https://www.jbaforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/A-Tale-of-Two-Programs-March-2021.pdf>

reasons; for example, according to service providers, youth tend to choose to stay in unsheltered locations or with friends because they are often victimized in adult shelters. Additionally, in a May 2020 report, the University of California, Berkley (UCB) School of Public Health reported the risk of COVID-19 infection for youth experiencing homelessness “is increased by their tendency to have to frequently change where they are sleeping, to be intermittently unsheltered, and to change with whom they are sheltering.” Unfortunately, youth experiencing homelessness are also at an unusually high risk for several life-threatening conditions including “not having their basic food and shelter needs met, untreated mental health disorders, substance use, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection, sexual trafficking, physical and sexual abuse, and suicide” which may also increase their risk for COVID-19 infection.²

7) *Double referral.* This bill passed out of the Human Services Committee on a 5-0 vote on March 23, 2021.

RELATED LEGISLATION:

SB 678 (Rubio, 2021) — establishes “unaccompanied women” as a sub-population of the state’s homelessness population and requires the HCFC to set goals to prevent and end homelessness among unaccompanied women in the state. *This bill will be heard in the Housing Committee on April 15, 2021.*

SB 918 (Wiener, Chapter 841, Statutes of 2018) — established the Homeless Youth Act of 2018 and requires the HCFC to take on additional related responsibilities focused on addressing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

AB 824 (Lackey, 2018) — would have created the Transitional Housing for Homeless Youth Grant Program in the Office of Emergency Services to award grants to nonprofit entities providing specified services to homeless youth aged 18 to 24, and allocated \$15 million General Fund to the program. *This bill was held on suspense in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.*

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: Yes Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Friday, April 9, 2021.)

² *On the COVID-19 Front Line and Hurting: Addressing the Needs of Providers for Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Berkeley and Alameda County*, UC Berkeley Public Health, (May 2020).

SUPPORT:

Alliance for Children's Rights (Co-Sponsor)
California Coalition for Youth (Co-Sponsor)
Children Now (Co-Sponsor)
Grace Institute - End Child Poverty in Ca (Co-Sponsor)
American Academy of Pediatrics, California
American Civil Liberties Union of California
Aspiranet
California Alternative Payment Program Association
California Association of Food Banks
California Association of Student Councils
California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association
California Housing Partnership Corporation
California Narcotic Officers' Association
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
California School Employees Association
California Youth Connection
Casa of Los Angeles
Catholic Charities East Bay
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County
Children's Institute
Coachella Valley Coalition on Youth Homelessness
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul Province of The West
Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
Florence Crittenton Services of Orange County
Generation Up
Hathaway-Sycamores
Hillsides
Home Start
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Larkin Street Youth Services
Martin Luther King Jr Freedom Center
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
National Center for Youth Law
Public Counsel
Sacramento LGBT Community Center
San Diego Youth Services
San Francisco Youth Commission
South Bay Community Services
The Children's Movement of Fresno

The San Diego LGBT Community Center
Transgender Health and Wellness Center
Voices Youth Centers
Western Center on Law & Poverty
YMCA of San Diego County, Youth and Family Services
Youth Emerging Stronger

OPPOSITION:

None received

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