BUDGET PROPOSAL
10% Homeless Youth Set-Aside of the California Access to Housing and Services Fund

BACKGROUND
Youth comprise a significant, yet largely overlooked segment of the homeless population in California. According to the 2019 Point-In-Time count, 8% of homeless individuals in California are unaccompanied youth, age 24 and below.1 Of the total number of unaccompanied youth in California, 79% are unsheltered.

A 2016 study found that two-thirds of youth experiencing homelessness reported at least one type of victimization:
- sexually assaulted or raped (14.5%),
- beaten up (32%),
- assaulted (18.3%) or threatened (40.5%) with a weapon and
- robbed (40.8%).

PROBLEM
There are two key problems that have prevented youth homelessness from being addressed in California:

1. Lack of funding: Despite its size, both the State of California and the federal government have historically failed to fund housing programs for youth experiencing homelessness. The only permanent federal investment in youth homelessness is the $127.4 million Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, less than 1% of the federal government’s $19 billion annual investment in homelessness.iii In California, the total annual state investment in youth homelessness is just one million.iv

2. Lack of prioritization in existing funding: State and federal funding prioritizes individuals who have been chronically homeless. While this is a reasonable policy goal, it has the unintended effect of excluding youth who, while homeless, do not have the same acuity as older homeless individuals.

THIS BUDGET PROPOSAL
This budget proposal would require 10% of the California Access to Housing and Services Fund to be spent to address youth homelessness. The California Fund is a $2 billion investment in homelessness being proposed by a statewide coalition of over 50 organizations, led by Housing California and the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

DOES A YOUTH SET-ASIDE WORK?
Yes. In 2018, the California State Legislature took an important step towards reducing homelessness among youth by requiring five percent of the $500 million Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) to be spent on addressing the needs of homeless youth. This investment has been successful. A 2019 survey of jurisdictions that received HEAP found that 10.8% of funding was directed to homeless youth, more than double the amount required in state law. The most common grant uses were for shelter (31%), navigation/case management (31%), transitional housing (26%), flex funds/hotel vouchers (20%), Rapid-Rehousing (19%), Permanent Supportive Housing (19%), and prevention services (17%).vi

HEAP grant recipients indicated the youth set-aside was an effective and necessary strategy to address youth homelessness. Of those surveyed, 100% indicated that a youth set-aside was necessary to direct funding to homeless youth. Additionally, 100% of grant recipients reported that they considered themselves well-positioned to administer funding to address youth homelessness.

Given the success of the five percent youth set-aside, the California State Legislature and Administration required eight percent of the $650 million Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Program to be dedicated to homeless youth.vii Local jurisdictions will apply to the California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council by February 15, 2020.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Simone Tureck Lee, Director of Housing & Health
John Burton Advocates for Youth
415-693-1323
simone@jbay.org

---

4 https://www.caloes.ca.gov/grant-details?itemID=209&itemTitle=2018-19+Homeless+Youth+and+Exploitation+(HX)+Program+RFA
5 Youth Homelessness in California: The Impact of the Five Percent Youth Set-Aside in the Homeless Emergency Aid Program
6 ibid.
7 https://www.bchp.ca.gov/hcfc/hhap_program.html