

February 28, 2020

The Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair  
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair  
Assembly Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Addressing Youth Experiencing Homelessness — SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Mitchell and Assembly Member Ting:

On behalf of our respective organizations, we are asking you to continue the Legislature's leadership on the issue of homelessness by ensuring that there is a *set aside of 20% to serving youth*. We applaud your commitment to securing a minimum of 8% from the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP) and a minimum of 5% from the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) to be set aside for youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness in the last two budget deals. As such, we urge you to maintain funding designated for youth within any one-time and on-going funding appropriated to address homelessness this year.

California lacks a clear on-going commitment to prevent and end homelessness among young people. The Legislative Analyst's Office recent review of "The Governor's Homelessness Plan" recommends that the Legislature identify its own priorities for addressing homelessness and develop a plan that aligns with those priorities. We recommend that the Legislature incorporate the following recommendations into your plan and priorities:

**20% Youth Set Aside.** Using the HHAP allocation methodology, youth represent 10% of the State's homeless population. The youth set-asides included in HEAP and HHAP represent exciting first steps to acknowledging and addressing youth homelessness in California and have demonstrated effectiveness. Communities like San Francisco that have been investing more resources in addressing youth needs are actually seeing decreases in their rates of youth homelessness.

We know that the Point In Time count is an undercount, especially when it comes to youth. If we are to get ahead of the issue, then we need to dedicate more resources to this specific population. Given decades of state and federal underinvestment in the needs of youth, it is not surprising that chronic homelessness is a growing problem. To get ahead of the issue, at least 20% of any one-time and on-going funding needs to be set aside for youth.

**Make Coordinated Entry Work for Youth.** Now that state funding has been provided to all Continuums of Care (CoCs) to bring their Coordinated Entry Systems into compliance with federal requirements, it's time to require CoCs to either have youth-specific Coordinated Entry Systems (Youth CES) and include youth specific entry points, assessment and prioritization,

adaptive housing and services, or if there is no Youth CES, the CoC needs, at a minimum, to use a youth centered tool (TAY-VI-SPDAT) and structure their prioritization policy in a way that does not disadvantage young people who may have had shorter lengths of time homeless.

**Embed elements from AB 307.** Use the Youth CES to assess and refer youth to housing opportunities created locally and in line with regional needs and planning efforts. Contracted providers should proactively engage homeless youth to determine which supportive services meet the needs of each participant and, if appropriate, the participant’s family. Jurisdictions or contracted providers must offer supportive services designed to meet the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness, which may include the following:

- Diverse housing options.
- Problem-solving services to maintain existing housing.
- Housing navigation.
- Drug abuse education, prevention, and treatment services.
- Transitional living plan and services.
- Access to education and employment assistance, including literacy and vocational training.
- Independent living skill development, economic stability, and mobility services.
- Counseling and case management services.
- Screening, assessment, and treatment or referral of behavioral and physical healthcare services.
- Services for pregnant and parenting youth.
- Services for LGBTQ youth.
- Family support, including family reunification, when safe and appropriate, and engagement and intervention, when appropriate.
- Family finding services to identify appropriate family members.
- Outreach to young people experiencing homelessness.

Solving youth homelessness is a critical part of ending California’s larger homelessness crisis because young people who experience homelessness are five times more likely than their peers to become homeless adults. Based on the 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, California has the highest number of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in the country with 11,993 youth between the ages of 12-24, which is 34.2% of the country’s total, plus an additional 2,220 parenting youth and their children experiencing homelessness. California also had the highest rate of unaccompanied youth who were unsheltered at 78.9%.

Homelessness among some groups of youth is significantly disproportionate – up to 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. Among racial and ethnic groups, African American youth were especially overrepresented, with an 83% increased risk of having experienced homelessness over youth of other races. Most telling, the lack of a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED) was the most strongly correlated indicator with the greatest risk of experiencing homelessness. These young adults, without a high school diploma or GED, had 4.5 times the risk of experiencing homelessness compared to peers who completed high school.

No young person should have to choose between school and the streets or between meaningful work and the street economy. No young person should be sleeping on a city bus or camping on a sidewalk. These critical investments will ensure that there are programs specifically designed to support and serve youth and young adults. California can, and must, do more for our young people who are experiencing homelessness. If youth or young adults do experience homelessness, then it must be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

We respectfully request that the Legislature include a 20% set aside for youth in any one-time and on-going funding for homelessness, ensure coordinated entry works for youth, and embed elements of the combatting youth homelessness grants from AB 307. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



1 Individual:

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cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee  
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Committee  
Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins  
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon  
Senator Scott Wiener  
Assembly Member Eloise Gómez Reyes