

Senate Bill 456

HOUSING VULNERABLE YOUTH

Senator Caroline Menjivar (D – San Fernando Valley)

SUMMARY

SB 456 will combat homelessness and housing instability for California's most vulnerable youth. By expanding opportunities for service providers to apply directly for Homekey 2.0 youth set aside funds, SB 456 will increase the availability and accessibility of youth housing.

PROBLEM

Current law directs the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (under the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency) to establish goals to prevent youth homelessness and improve low-barrier and diverse housing opportunities. However, recent programs, like Homekey 2.0, aimed at increasing the number of housing units available for homeless individuals require a public agency to be the lead applicant for projects. This has made the program unnecessarily limiting. Local government may have limited bandwidth or even no interest in youth projects, making it difficult for youth service providers to engage in providing housing for vulnerable youth.

BACKGROUND

Housing instability and homelessness significantly hinder the pursuit of higher education, meaningful employment, and self-sufficiency for transition aged youth currently or formerly in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or under probation supervision as they transition to adulthood.

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. Further, some data has shown that 50% of the chronically homeless population had their first experience of homelessness when they were under the age of 25.¹

¹ Johnson, R. (2013). Working together to end youth homelessness. Los Angeles Services Authority Greater LA Homeless County. Retrieved: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/cms/docs/WorkingTogetherHomeless.pdf>

California's chronic housing shortage and the prolonged challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic are exacerbating youth housing instability. For example, in Chapin Hall's 2018 CalYouth study, over 35% of youth reported they experienced homelessness while actively participating in extended foster care.² In 2022, California counted 9,590 youth experiencing homelessness on their own, and another 1,909 youth experiencing homelessness who were parenting children of their own.

The purpose of extended foster care, which supports the transition to independence for youth in foster care aged 18-21, is to prevent homelessness among youth as they enter early adulthood. However, without sufficient supportive housing, the vision of extended foster care is falling flat. Failure to support our transition aged youth experiencing homelessness results in increased chronic homelessness, disconnection as adults, negative health impacts, increased risk of mental health and addiction issues, as well as a decreasing quality of life.

SOLUTION

SB 456 will increase housing stability and enhance the impact of Homekey 2.0 for youth by:

- ✓ Allowing community-based organizations to directly apply for the youth set aside funds.
- ✓ Clarifying that any Homekey funded program serving Nonminor Dependents in extended foster care does not require a referral through a coordinated entry system

STATUS

Introduced – February 13, 2023

SUPPORT

Alliance for Children's Rights (co-sponsor)
California Coalition for Youth (co-sponsor)
Children Now (co-sponsor)

² Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., & Park, S. (2018). Report from CalYOUTH: Findings on the relationship between extended foster care and youth's outcomes at age 21. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

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