



FACT SHEET

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Senator, 38th District



Senate Bill 1204 – Education of Homeless Youth

SUMMARY

SB 1204 requires schools and school districts to collaborate with organizations that provide identification of, and provide services to, homeless children, such as counseling, social welfare services, meals, and housing.

BACKGROUND

California has almost one-third (27% or 151, 278 people) of all homeless individuals across the nation, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. About half of California's homeless population reports that mental health and/or substance use disorders contribute to their lack of housing.¹ Californians are becoming increasingly concerned with the state's growing homeless population. In fact, 63% of Californians state that homelessness is one of the biggest issues facing the state.² While last year's budget included \$650 million for local governments to tackle their homeless issue,³ in addition to funds that local governments already allocated to the issue, the homelessness crisis is still growing. For example, Los Angeles passed a \$1.2 billion bond to ease the homeless crisis,⁴ yet 63% of LA residents still believe the homeless population has increased over the last year.⁵ Clearly, a new comprehensive and compassionate approach to solving California's homeless crisis is needed, and fast.

While Governor Newsom's proposed budget includes \$1 billion to tackle homelessness in the state, these funds must be spent efficiently and responsibly towards successful programs and services for the homeless population.

Homeless youth face several challenges in their education such as being chronically absent, suspended from school, and dropping out of school at a much higher rate. In order to address these challenges, the state receives federal funds to identify these youth and provide services to enable them to succeed in school. Local Education Agencies (LEAs), comprised of school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education, designate local liaisons who identify youth experiencing homelessness

and provide them with support services related to their education. In the 2017-2018 academic year, LEAs identified nearly 270,000 unaccompanied youth and families with children experiencing homelessness, representing about 4% of the state's K-12 population.

PROBLEM

According to a November 2019 report from the California State Auditor, LEAs have not always been effective in ensuring that youth experiencing homelessness have access to the services that they need to succeed academically. One reason for their ineffectiveness is the infrequent training that LEAs receive from the state coordinator, especially considering the high turnover rate these positions have. Furthermore, the Department of Education does not require County Offices of Education to report the trainings they provide to LEAs to the state coordinator. Thus, the state coordinator cannot assure that all LEAs receive adequate and ongoing training.

SOLUTION

SB 1204 implements the California State Auditor's recommendations to make LEAs more effective. Specifically, this bill requires LEAs to collaborate with community organizations that provide services to homeless youth to enhance the identification of, and provide services to, those children. This bill would require these collaborations to include working with organizations that provide counseling services, social welfare services, meal services, and housing services. While LEAs may not always be effective or have adequate training, SB 1204 will ensure that LEAs at least collaborate with resources that can help them identify these students and provide services to enable them to succeed in school.

CONTACT

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¹Source: <https://calmatters.org/explainers/californias-homelessness-crisis-explained/>

²Source: <https://www.ppic.org/interactive/californians-and-the-housing-crisis/>

³Source: <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4102>

⁴Source: <https://lacontroller.org/audits-and-reports/high-cost-of-homeless-housing-hhh/>

⁵Source: <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-their-government-november-2019.pdf>