

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: SB 1220

SPONSOR: Senator McKay

SUBJECT: Commission on Homeless

DATE: March 10, 2000

REVISED: 03/14/00

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Bowman</u>	<u>Yeatman</u>	<u>CA</u>	<u>Fav/1 amendment</u>
2.	<u>Peters</u>	<u>Hadi</u>	<u>FP</u>	<u>Fav/1 amendment</u>
3.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
4.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
5.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

I. Summary:

The bill creates a 23-member Commission on the Homeless whose purpose is to review the problems of the homeless and propose solutions for reducing homelessness to the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House by January 1, 2001.

The bill appropriates \$250,000 to fund the operation and administration of the Commission on the Homeless.

II. Present Situation:

Characteristics of Florida's Homeless Population

Being homeless is defined in s. 420.621(4), F.S., as: having a nighttime residence in a public or private emergency shelter or "on the streets or under a bridge or aqueduct, in a park, subway, bus terminal, railroad station, airport, abandoned building, or vehicle, or in any other public or private space that is not designed for shelter." According to estimates of Florida's 20 homeless coalitions, there are at least 52,000 homeless people in Florida on any given day. This figure represents a slight decrease from the number reported for fiscal year 1996-7 of 55,000. However, homeless persons are difficult to locate, track and count. The demographic profile of the homeless population in Florida is as follows¹:

- 31% of Florida's homeless are families.
- 50% of the homeless population in Florida are single men and 19% are single women.

¹The Department of Children and Families is required by s. 420.623(4), F.S., to prepare an Annual Report on Homeless Conditions in Florida to the Governor and Legislature. The following statistics are taken from the most recent annual report which covers FY 1997-98).

- 25% of the state's homeless population includes children 18 years and younger.
- 8% of the state's homeless population is elderly.
- 68% of the homeless population are considered new homeless.
- 32% of Florida's homeless population are considered the chronic or long term homeless.
- 70% of the homeless people in Florida are reported to be state residents, while the remaining 30% are from out-of-state or another county.
- 22% of the homeless people in Florida are veterans.
- 37% of the state's homeless suffer from alcoholism and/or drug abuse problems.
- 24% of Florida's homeless are estimated to be mentally ill.
- 26% of the state's homeless population has both mental illness and substance abuse problems.
- 8% of Florida's homeless suffer from AIDS or HIV.
- 17% of the homeless in Florida have disabilities.
- 43% of the homeless are employed, many of them in part-time jobs without benefits.
- 4% of the homeless in Florida are farm workers.

The major causes of homelessness in Florida include poverty, unemployment and poor wages, a lack of affordable housing, mental illness, alcoholism, drug abuse, family disintegration, and lack of education and training. Additional causes of homelessness identified by the 20 homeless coalitions include the institutional release of people from prisons and institutions without employment, housing, or a viable means of self-support; school failure and lack of education; impediments to employment such as lack of affordable child care and transportation; life skill deficiencies; emergency situations such as eviction and illness; and migration and immigration of people to Florida without means of self-support.

Federal and State Programs to Address the Needs of the Homeless

In 1987, Congress enacted the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The original act consisted of 15 programs providing a range of services to homeless people, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, job training, primary health care, education, and permanent housing. Most of the money funding these programs go directly to states to help the homeless. The Florida Department of Children and Families estimates that federal spending for Florida's homeless has been approximately \$253 million since 1987.

In Florida, many of the financial and social services for the homeless are provided through 20 local coalitions for the homeless created by the Department of Children and Family Services as required by s. 420.623, F.S. The major functions of the local homeless coalitions are:

- ▶ planning and coordinating homeless services
- ▶ promoting public awareness about the needs of the homeless
- ▶ providing information and referral to help homeless people obtain the services they require
- ▶ gathering and reporting data on homeless conditions in Florida
- ▶ seeking federal, state and local resources to assist the homeless

Local coalitions prepare local plans of action that identify and rank local needs related to problems of homelessness, and include a spending plan. Local homeless coalitions can apply for state funding through a competitive grants-in-aid program administered by the department through its districts. Organizations contracting to provide services through financial assistance provided through the grant program must provide a minimum of 25 percent of the funding necessary for the support of project operations. In fiscal year 1999-2000, the Legislature appropriated \$735,122 in grant-in-aid money to assist community agencies and organizations serving the homeless and \$253,200 to support the 20 homeless coalitions.

The focus of many of the community-based homeless programs is on the delivery of shelter and other emergency services. According to the local homeless coalitions, there are 149 homeless shelters in Florida with a total bed capacity of 6,946. These facilities meet only 13% of the shelter needs of Florida's 52,500 homeless. It is estimated that there are now 7,833 transitional housing beds for the homeless that are able to provide longer term care. Eighteen of the homeless coalitions provide a continuum of care for the homeless that involves the coordination between multiple community agencies to provide outreach services, emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing and other support services.

Several other state initiatives benefit the homeless. The Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program, authorized by s. 414.16, F.S., provides approximately \$1.8 million per year to help homeless families and those at immediate risk of homelessness due to natural and household disasters, loss of wages, and other conditions that cause an imminent loss of housing. Four thousand families each year are served by this program. In addition, the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services funds and operates a statewide network of 29 homeless and runaway youth shelters. In fiscal year 1997-98, the Legislature appropriated \$27.6 million for this program. Additional programs that benefit the homeless include the State Domestic Abuse Program and the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program operated by Florida A&M University.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates a 23-member commission on the Homeless whose purpose is to review the problems of the homeless and propose solutions for reducing homelessness to the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House by January 1, 2001.

The commission is to be composed of 23 members, 8 appointed by the Governor, 5 appointed by the President of the Senate, 5 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Secretaries of the Departments of Health, Children and Family Services and Community Affairs, and the Executive Director of the Florida Housing Finance Corporation. The Lieutenant Governor is to serve as chairperson of the commission. Any vacancy in the commission must be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

The appointments to the commission must be made within 14 days, and the first meeting must be held within 30 days of the effective date of the bill. A majority vote of a quorum is necessary for the commission to take formal action.

The commission is charged with investigating the causes of homelessness, the services currently provided to the homeless and ways in which current government programs could be better adapted to serve the needs of the homeless. The commission must hold at least four public hearings throughout the state to solicit public input.

The commission may employ an executive director and receive other assistance from Governor's agencies. Commission members are entitled to receive travel reimbursement and per diem expenses. The commission is to be funded by a \$250,000 appropriation from the General Revenue Fund to the Executive Office of the Governor.

The commission must issue its written report by January 1, 2001 and shall continue in existence no later than January 31, 2001.

The bill is effective upon becoming a law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill appropriates \$250,000 from the General Revenue fund to the Executive Office of the Governor.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

#1 by Comprehensive Planning, Local and Military Affairs:

Adds to the charge of the commission the task of reviewing the problems of and proposing solutions for relieving homelessness among veterans.

#2 by Fiscal Policy:

Reduces the appropriation to the Executive Office of the Governor from \$250,000 to \$100,000.