

STORAGE NAME: h1675.cf

DATE: March 19, 2000

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
ANALYSIS**

BILL #: HB 1675

RELATING TO: Homelessness

SPONSOR(S): Representative Feeney

TIED BILL(S): SB 1220 (I)

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) Children & Families
 - (2) Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations
 - (3)
 - (4)
 - (5)
-

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.

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II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain:

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

Homeless defined

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."

Local homeless coalitions

Section 420.623, F.S., requires the Department of Children and Families to establish at least one local coalition in each district to plan, network, coordinate, and oversee the delivery of services to the homeless. There are currently 20 local homeless shelters in the state. Many of the financial and social services for the homeless are provided through 20 local coalitions for 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 percent of the shelter needs in Florida. 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.

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Coalitions also report that there are now 39 co-located, multi-agency homeless assistance centers in Florida. Three years ago, there were only two of these centers known to the department. These facilities provide a range of daytime services for the homeless, often including showers, laundry facilities, food, clothing, personal care items, private mail facilities, private lockers, assistance in preparing job applications, training in interviewing techniques and job readiness skills.

The DCF is required to submit an annual report consisting of a compilation of data collected by local coalitions in each district, local spending plans, programs and resources available at the local level, and recommendations for programs and funding. These reports have been submitted on a timely basis.

Other state initiatives

Millions of dollars of state funds are spent on the homeless each year through Medicaid, housing programs, public assistance, public health units, education programs, efforts to preserve families, labor and employment security, alcohol, drug abuse and mental health programs, child support enforcement, juvenile justice and other programs.

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.

Federal 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 goes 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.

State and National estimates of homelessness

By its very nature, homelessness is impossible to measure with 100% accuracy. Nationally, the most widely cited example of a point-in-time estimate is the approximately 500,000-600,000 homeless people found in shelters, eating at soup kitchens, or congregating on the street during one week in 1988. The 500,000-600,000 estimate is sometimes updated by using a projected rate of increase of 5% a year to produce an estimate of over 700,000 people homeless on any given night, and up to 2 million people who experience homelessness during one year (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1999).

According to estimates of Florida's 20 homeless coalitions, there are at least 55,000 homeless people in Florida on any given day.

Characteristics of the homeless in Florida

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According to the latest *Annual Report on Homeless Conditions in Florida (March 1988)*, the demographic profile of the homeless population in Florida is as follows:

- 35% are families.
- 49% are single men and 16% are single women.
- 8% are elderly.
- 68% are new homeless.
- 32% are the chronic or long term homeless.
- 73% are Florida residents, while the remaining 27% are from out-of-state or another country.
- 24% are veterans.
- 41% suffer from alcoholism and/or drug abuse problems.
- 23% are estimated to be mentally ill.
- 27% has both mental illness and substance abuse problems.
- 9% suffer from AIDS or HIV.
- 13% have disabilities.
- 36% are employed, many of them in part-time jobs without benefits.
- 7% are farm workers.

C. 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.

D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

Section 1.

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

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

Section 2.

Appropriates \$250,000 from the General Revenue Fund to the Executive Office of the Governor to pay the administrative expenses of the Commission.

Section 3.

The bill is effective upon becoming a law.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

N/A

2. Expenditures:

The bill appropriates \$250,000 from the General Revenue Fund to the Executive Office of the Governor to pay the administrative expenses of the Commission.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

N/A

2. Expenditures:

N/A

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C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

N/A

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

N/A

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

N/A

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

N/A

C. OTHER COMMENTS:

N/A

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

N/A

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VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILIES:

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

Bob Barrios

Bob Barrios