

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to homelessness; amending s. 420.621,  
 3           F.S.; deleting, revising, and adding definitions; creating  
 4           s. 420.628, F.S.; establishing the Housing Retention  
 5           Program in the State Office on Homelessness in the  
 6           Department of Children and Family Services for the purpose  
 7           of awarding competitive grants to local agencies to be  
 8           used for homelessness-prevention assistance; providing a  
 9           grant application procedure; requiring grant applicants to  
 10          develop a housing-retention assistance plan and to provide  
 11          a match of cash and in-kind services; providing eligible  
 12          uses for grant funding and funding limits; establishing  
 13          performance outcomes; requiring mandatory temporary  
 14          housing referrals for households unable to retain their  
 15          home; providing an effective date.

16  
 17   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

18  
 19           Section 1.   Section 420.621, Florida Statutes, is amended  
 20   to read:

21           420.621   Definitions; ss. 420.621-420.628 ~~420.621-~~  
 22   ~~420.627.~~--As used in ss. 420.621-420.628 ~~420.621~~ ~~420.627~~, the  
 23   term following terms shall have the following meanings, unless  
 24   ~~the context otherwise requires:~~

25           (1)   "Council on Homelessness" means the council created in  
 26   s. 420.622. ~~"AFDC" means Aid to Families with Dependent Children~~  
 27   ~~as administered under chapter 409.~~

28           (2)   "Department" means the Department of Children and

29 Family Services.

30 (3) "District" means a service district of the department  
 31 ~~of Children and Family Services,~~ as set forth in s. 20.19.

32 (4) "Homeless" or "homeless person" means ~~refers to~~ an  
 33 individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime  
 34 residence. The term includes an individual ~~or an individual who~~  
 35 ~~has a primary nighttime residence that is:~~

36 (a) Sharing the housing of others due to the loss of  
 37 housing, economic hardship or similar reason; living in a motel,  
 38 hotel, travel trailer park, or camping ground due to the lack of  
 39 alternative accommodations; living in an emergency or  
 40 transitional shelter; abandoned in a hospital; or awaiting  
 41 foster care placement. A supervised publicly or privately  
 42 operated shelter designed to provide temporary living  
 43 accommodations, including welfare hotels, congregate shelters,  
 44 and transitional housing for the mentally ill;

45 ~~(b) An institution that provides a temporary residence for~~  
 46 ~~individuals intended to be institutionalized; or~~

47 ~~(b)(e)~~ Whose primary residence is a public or private  
 48 place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular  
 49 sleeping accommodation for human beings.

50 (c) Living in a car, park, public space, abandoned  
 51 building, bus or train station, or similar setting.

52 (d) Who is migratory and living in circumstances described  
 53 in paragraphs (a) - (c).

54  
 55 The term does not refer to an ~~any~~ individual imprisoned or  
 56 otherwise detained pursuant to state or federal law.

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57 (5) "Local coalition for the homeless" means a coalition  
58 established pursuant to s. 420.623.

59 (6) "New and temporary homeless" means an individual or  
60 family that is ~~those individuals or families who are~~ homeless  
61 due to external factors, such as unemployment or other loss of  
62 income, personal or family-life crises, or the shortage of low-  
63 income housing.

64 (7) "State Office on Homelessness" means the state office  
65 created in s. 420.622. "Secretary" means the secretary of the  
66 Department of Children and Family Services.

67 Section 2. Section 420.628, Florida Statutes, is created  
68 to read:

69 420.628 Housing Retention Program.--

70 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.--There is created the Housing Retention  
71 Program to provide funding for comprehensive, short-term  
72 financial aid and case management to households at risk of  
73 losing their current home due to a financial or other crisis.  
74 The State Office on Homelessness, with the concurrence of the  
75 Council on Homelessness, is authorized to accept and administer  
76 moneys appropriated to provide such assistance to qualified  
77 households to keep them in stable housing conditions and to  
78 avoid becoming homeless.

79 (2) APPLICATION PROCEDURE.--A qualified local agency,  
80 including a unit of government, public authority, local  
81 coalition for the homeless, designated lead agency for a  
82 homeless assistance continuum of care catchment area, nonprofit  
83 organization, or any other entity seeking to provide assistance  
84 in preventing homelessness may submit a grant application for

85 competitive review to the State Office on Homelessness.  
86 Preference shall be given to local agencies that have  
87 established local partnerships that effectively address the  
88 needs of households facing the loss of their home and that can  
89 demonstrate the ability to leverage other public and private  
90 funding for the provision of emergency assistance to such  
91 households. Preference shall also be given to local agencies  
92 that can demonstrate success in keeping households in their  
93 current home and avoiding homelessness.

94 (3) HOUSING-RETENTION ASSISTANCE PLAN.--To qualify for a  
95 grant, the local agency must develop, implement, and annually  
96 update a housing-retention assistance plan.

97 (a) The plan must include:

98 1. The services and assistance to be made available to at-  
99 risk households, including how the local agency will provide  
100 case management to the household.

101 2. The local partners involved, their roles and  
102 responsibilities, and the resources they are committing to  
103 homelessness-prevention assistance.

104 3. An annual program budget detailing the amount and use  
105 of funding committed to homelessness-prevention assistance,  
106 including funding from other public and private resources.

107 4. The assessment and selection criteria that will be used  
108 to identify households to be assisted and how the level of  
109 assistance per household will be determined.

110 5. The outreach efforts that will be used to market the  
111 availability of homelessness-prevention assistance to at-risk  
112 households.

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113       6. How the local agency shall track all households  
114 receiving homelessness-prevention assistance, as required under  
115 subsection (8), to determine if the household was successful in  
116 keeping the home.

117       (b) At a minimum, the plan must be made part of and be  
118 consistent with the applicable local homeless assistance  
119 continuum of care plan developed pursuant to s. 420.624.

120       (c) If applicable, the local agency should coordinate the  
121 plan with the local housing assistance plan developed pursuant  
122 to s. 420.9075.

123       (4) LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS.--The intent of the Housing  
124 Retention Program is to bring together multiple agencies and  
125 providers in order to provide a full range of services and the  
126 aid needed to stabilize the household and retain the home. The  
127 local partnership may include the local government housing  
128 agency or department, public housing authority, local coalition  
129 for the homeless or designated lead agency for the homeless  
130 assistance continuum of care catchment area, workforce  
131 development board, school district, and local health care  
132 providers, or any other entity having a role in contributing to  
133 homelessness prevention. The local partnership may be formalized  
134 by written agreements or memoranda of understanding specifying  
135 roles and responsibilities.

136       (5) ELIGIBLE GRANT USES.--The grant funding may be used by  
137 the local agency grantee to provide the following assistance:

138       (a) Rental or mortgage payments.

139       (b) Utility bill payments.

140       (c) Payment of major household bills contributing to the

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141 financial crisis, including health care bills, auto repair  
142 bills, property insurance premiums, or similar costs.

143 (d) Payment of security deposits if needed to relocate the  
144 household to more affordable housing.

145 (e) Payment of child care costs necessary to enable the  
146 parent or head of household to seek or retain employment.

147 (f) Payment of case management costs, which may not exceed  
148 10 percent of the local agency's grant award.

149 (6) ASSISTANCE LIMITS.--Homelessness-prevention assistance  
150 provided by the local agency may not exceed an average of \$3,000  
151 per household for all households served by the grant. Any one  
152 household may not receive more than \$6,000 in direct financial  
153 aid. Public or private funding leveraged by the local agency may  
154 be in addition to the limits set in this subsection.

155 (7) MATCH.--Local agencies must match the grant with both  
156 cash and in-kind services. The cash match must be at least 25  
157 percent of the grant award and in-kind services must be valued  
158 at least 25 percent of the amount of the state grant.

159 (8) PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES.--The goal for the Housing  
160 Retention Program is to ensure that at least 85 percent of the  
161 households assisted remain in their homes for a period of 2  
162 years. Each local agency grantee shall track, monitor, and  
163 report on the households receiving assistance for at least 2  
164 years following the date the last assistance was received by the  
165 household.

166 (9) MANDATORY REFERRAL.--If a household receiving  
167 assistance is not able to retain the home, the local agency must  
168 be prepared to immediately refer the household for placement in

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169 | a suitable temporary housing arrangement. Such arrangement must  
170 | keep all the household members together in the same temporary  
171 | arrangement.

172 |       Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.