

FOR CONSIDERATION By the Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

586-1470-07

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

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21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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23           Section 1. Section 420.621, Florida Statutes, is  
24 amended to read:

25           420.621 Definitions; ss. 420.621-420.628  
26 ~~420.621-420.627~~.--As used in ss. 420.621-420.628  
27 ~~420.621-420.627~~, the term ~~following terms shall have the~~  
28 ~~following meanings, unless the context otherwise requires:~~  
29           (1) "Council on Homelessness" means the council  
30 created in s. 420.622. ~~"AFDC" means Aid to Families with~~  
31 ~~Dependent Children as administered under chapter 409.~~

1 (2) "Department" means the Department of Children and  
2 Family Services.

3 (3) "District" means a service district of the  
4 department ~~of Children and Family Services,~~ as set forth in s.  
5 20.19.

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

10 (a) Sharing the housing of others due to the loss of  
11 housing, economic hardship or similar reason; living in a  
12 motel, hotel, travel trailer park, or camping ground due to  
13 the lack of alternative accommodations; living in an emergency  
14 or transitional shelter; abandoned in a hospital; or awaiting  
15 foster care placement. A supervised publicly or privately  
16 ~~operated shelter designed to provide temporary living~~  
17 ~~accommodations, including welfare hotels, congregate shelters,~~  
18 ~~and transitional housing for the mentally ill;~~

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

21 (b)(c) Whose primary residence is a public or private  
22 place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a ~~regular~~  
23 sleeping accommodation for human beings.

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

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

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29 The term does not refer to an ~~any~~ individual imprisoned or  
30 otherwise detained pursuant to state or federal law.  
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1 (5) "Local coalition for the homeless" means a  
2 coalition established pursuant to s. 420.623.

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

8 (7) "State Office on Homelessness" means the state  
9 office created in s. 420.622. ~~"Secretary" means the secretary~~  
10 ~~of the Department of Children and Family Services.~~

11 Section 2. Section 420.628, Florida Statutes, is  
12 created to read:

13 420.628 Housing Retention Program.--

14 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.--There is created the Housing  
15 Retention Program to provide funding for comprehensive,  
16 short-term financial aid and case management to households at  
17 risk of losing their current home due to a financial or other  
18 crisis. The State Office on Homelessness, with the concurrence  
19 of the Council on Homelessness, is authorized to accept and  
20 administer moneys appropriated to provide such assistance to  
21 qualified households to keep them in stable housing conditions  
22 and to avoid becoming homeless.

23 (2) APPLICATION PROCEDURE.--A qualified local agency,  
24 including a unit of government, public authority, local  
25 coalition for the homeless, designated lead agency for a  
26 homeless assistance continuum of care catchment area,  
27 nonprofit organization, or any other entity seeking to provide  
28 assistance in preventing homelessness may submit a grant  
29 application for competitive review to the State Office on  
30 Homelessness. Preference shall be given to local agencies that  
31 have established local partnerships that effectively address

1 the needs of households facing the loss of their home and that  
2 can demonstrate the ability to leverage other public and  
3 private funding for the provision of emergency assistance to  
4 such households. Preference shall also be given to local  
5 agencies that can demonstrate success in keeping households in  
6 their current home and avoid homelessness.

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

10 (a) The plan must include:

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

14 2. The local partners involved, their roles and  
15 responsibilities, and the resources they are committing to  
16 homelessness-prevention assistance.

17 3. An annual program budget detailing the amount and  
18 use of funding committed to homelessness-prevention  
19 assistance, including funding from other public and private  
20 resources.

21 4. The assessment and selection criteria that will be  
22 used to identify households to be assisted and how the level  
23 of assistance per household will be determined.

24 5. The outreach efforts that will be used to market  
25 the availability of homelessness-prevention assistance to  
26 at-risk households.

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

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

4 (c) If applicable, the local agency should coordinate  
5 the plan with the local housing assistance plan developed  
6 pursuant to s. 420.9075.

7 (4) LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS.--The intent of the Housing  
8 Retention Program is to bring together multiple agencies and  
9 providers in order to provide a full range of services and the  
10 aid needed to stabilize the household and retain the home.  
11 The local partnership may include the local government housing  
12 agency or department, public housing authority, local  
13 coalition for the homeless or designated lead agency for the  
14 homeless assistance continuum of care catchment area,  
15 workforce development board, school district, and local health  
16 care providers, or any other entity having a role in  
17 contributing to homelessness prevention. The local partnership  
18 may be formalized by written agreements or memoranda of  
19 understanding specifying roles and responsibilities.

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

23 (a) Rental or mortgage payments.

24 (b) Utility bill payments.

25 (c) Payment of major household bills contributing to  
26 the financial crisis, including health care bills, auto repair  
27 bills, property insurance premiums, or similar costs.

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

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

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

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

10 (7) MATCH.--Local agencies must match the grant with  
11 both cash and in-kind services. The cash match must be at  
12 least 25 percent of the grant award and in-kind services must  
13 be valued at at least 25 percent of the amount of the state  
14 grant.

15 (8) PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES.--The goal for the Housing  
16 Retention Program is to ensure that at least 85 percent of the  
17 households assisted remain in their homes for a period of 2  
18 years. Each local agency grantee shall track, monitor, and  
19 report on the households receiving assistance for at least 2  
20 years following the date the last assistance was received by  
21 the household.

22 (9) MANDATORY REFERRAL.--If a household receiving  
23 assistance is not able to retain the home, the local agency  
24 must be prepared to immediately refer the household for  
25 placement in a suitable temporary housing arrangement. Such  
26 arrangement must keep all the household members together in  
27 the same temporary arrangement.

28 Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a  
29 law.

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SENATE SUMMARY

Establishes the Housing Retention Program in the State Office on Homelessness in the Department of Children and Family Services for the purpose of awarding competitive grants to local agencies to be used for homelessness-prevention assistance. Provides for a grant application procedure and for grant application requirements including the development of a housing-retention assistance plan and a match of cash and in-kind services. Provides for eligible uses for grant funding. Provides for funding limits. Provides performance outcomes. Requires mandatory temporary housing referrals for households unable to retain the home.

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