

HB 2544 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Human Services

Action Date: 03/31/21

Action: Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference.
(Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 7-0-0-0

Yeas: 7 - Leif, Noble, Owens, Ruiz, Sanchez, Schouten, Williams

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 3/1, 3/31

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates \$2,200,000 to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to award two-year enhancement grants to organizations that provide services to unaccompanied homeless youth. Specifies purposes of said grants and eligibility requirements. Appropriates \$2,200,000 000 to the Department of Human Services to award two-year grants to organizations that operate host home projects for unaccompanied homeless youth. Specifies purposes of said grants and eligibility requirements. Directs DHS to report to the Legislative Assembly annually, with the first report due by September 15, 2022. Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Provisions of measure
- Age of unaccompanied youth eligible for different programs

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Appropriates \$2,200,000 to DHS for two-year enhancement grants to organizations that provide services to unaccompanied homeless youth, and \$2,200,000 for two-year grants to organizations that operate host home projects for unaccompanied homeless youth, to be awarded by DHS. Specifies purposes of said grants and eligibility requirements

BACKGROUND:

According to a report released by the U.S. Department of Education in January 2020, more than 1.5 million students enrolled in public schools nationwide were homeless during the 2017-2018 academic year, a 15 percent increase over the 2015-2016 school year. A 2017 national survey of over 26,000 youth and young adults estimates that each year about 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness; of those, the Voices of Youth Count from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago estimate 700,000 are unaccompanied minors. On any given night, it is estimated that approximately 41,000 unaccompanied youth aged 13-25 experience homelessness. Many factors increase a young person's odds of experiencing homelessness, including being Hispanic or Black; being a single parent; or being LGBTQ, with LGBTQ youth having more than twice the risk of being homeless than their cisgender or heterosexual peers.

The National Conference of State Legislatures reports homeless youth are vulnerable to multiple threats, including not having basic food and shelter needs met, not receiving treatment for mental health disorders, misusing substances, contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, being sexually exploited (including survival sex to meet basic needs), being physically victimized, and committing suicide. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center reports that one in three teens on the street will be lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home and the American Academy of Pediatrics finds youth experiencing homelessness are twice as likely to attempt suicide as their peers who are not homeless. In addition, youth who are homeless often experience a significant

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disruption in education.

House Bill 2544 A invests \$2.2 million to expand host homes and \$2.2 million to expand existing shelter and support services for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.