



TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH PERMANENTLY OVERCOME THEIR HOMELESSNESS AND TO PREVENT FUTURE HOMELESSNESS, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SHOULD:

1. Remove barriers to preK-12 school access and success by supporting at least \$105 million for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act program in the FY2020 Budget.
2. Remove barriers and increase support for homeless and foster youth in higher education by co-sponsoring the Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act (S. 789/H.R. 1724).
3. Remove barriers to accessing HUD homeless assistance by co-sponsoring the Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 2001).

- **Family and youth homelessness are at record levels.** Public schools identified 1.3 million homeless children and youth in 2016-2017, a 4% increase over the previous year, and the highest on record. Preliminary data from the U.S. Department of Education indicate that public schools identified over 1.5 million homeless children and youth in the 2017-2018 school year, a ten percent increase over the previous school year, and the highest number on record. Head Start programs also reported record levels of homeless children, from 26,200 homeless children in 2007-2008 to 52,764 in 2016-2017 – a 100% increase.
- **In addition to public school data, research suggests that youth homelessness is more prevalent than previously known.** Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that least 700,000 unaccompanied adolescents (ages 13-17) – 1 in 30 – experience homelessness on their own in a year. In contrast, public schools identified 111,753 unaccompanied homeless youth in 2015-2016. This suggests that for every unaccompanied youth identified by schools, at least five are not identified.
- **Homelessness creates barriers to education access and success,** including being unable to meet enrollment requirements; high mobility resulting in a lack of continuity and absenteeism; lack of transportation; lack of supplies and clothing; poor health, fatigue, and hunger; and emotional crisis/mental health issues.
- **As a result of these barriers, homeless children and youth struggle in school, and are more likely to drop out.** States that disaggregate graduation and drop-out rates of homeless youth have found higher drop-out rates and lower graduation rates compared to housed, poor youth. Other research indicates that homeless students are 87% more likely to drop out of high school.
- **Youth without a high school diploma are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness later in life.** In its Voices of Youth Count report, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that the top three risk factors for experiencing homelessness as a young adult were: 1) lack of a high school diploma or GED; 2) having a child; and 3) having an annual household income of under \$24,000. Education plays a key role in early intervention and prevention of future homelessness.

POLICY PRIORITIES FOR THE 116TH CONGRESS

1. Appropriate at least \$105 million for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act program.

The McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, recently reauthorized and strengthened by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), removes barriers to school enrollment, attendance, and success caused by homelessness. Local liaisons help identify homeless children and youth, ensure their school access and stability, provide them direct support service, and coordinate with community agencies to meet basic needs.

School district EHCY programs face significant costs in meeting the needs of homeless children and youth. Those costs include transportation, staff time, and educational and related services. Additional EHCY funding means more support for school districts to identify and support children and youth experiencing homelessness.

2. Remove barriers to higher education for homeless and foster youth by co-sponsoring The Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act of 2019 (S.789/H.R.1724).

Youth experiencing homelessness and youth from foster care face unique barriers to accessing and completing higher education. Lack of family and supports, coupled with histories of neglect, abuse, trauma, mobility, and deep poverty, create roadblocks to their path to and through post-secondary education.

The Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act of 2019 (S.789/H.R.1724) is bipartisan legislation that streamlines the financial aid process for homeless and foster youth. It also requires colleges and universities to designate higher education liaisons to assist homeless and foster youth, and to develop a plan to assist youth to access housing resources during and between academic terms. S.789/H.R.1724 provisions should be included in the Higher Education Act reauthorization.

3. Remove barriers to accessing HUD homeless assistance by co-sponsoring the Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 2001).

The definition of homelessness used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) excludes most homeless children and youth whose families pay for a motel room, or who must stay with other people temporarily, because there is nowhere else to go. These situations are unstable and often unsafe, putting children and youth at high risk of trafficking and violence. Other federal agencies and programs recognize that children and youth staying in these situations are homeless. But under HUD's definition, these children and youth are not even assessed for services.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act, H.R. 2001, is bipartisan legislation that would align HUD homeless assistance with child and youth-serving systems, including early childhood programs, public schools, and institutions of higher education, by allowing children and youth whose homelessness has been verified by one of eight specific federal programs to be eligible for HUD homeless assistance. Families and youth would be assessed for services using the same "vulnerability" indices (including age-appropriate criteria) used currently to prioritize people for assistance. H.R. 2001 also requires HUD to honor communities' assessments of their own needs for populations and program models.