
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anthony Portantino, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular Session

SB 914 (Rubio) - HELP Act

Version: March 22, 2022

Policy Vote: HUMAN S. 4 - 0, HOUSING
9 - 0

Urgency: No

Mandate: Yes

Hearing Date: May 16, 2022

Consultant: Mark McKenzie

Bill Summary: SB 914, the Homeless Equity for Left Behind Populations (HELP) Act, would require cities, counties, and continuums of care (CoCs) that receive state homelessness funding to coordinate with victim service providers and take specified actions to address the needs of families, people attempting to flee domestic violence, and unaccompanied women. The bill would also require the Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal-ICH), by January 1, 2025, to establish goals, gather data, and measure progress to prevent and end homelessness among domestic violence survivors, their children, and unaccompanied women, as specified.

Fiscal Impact:

- Cal-ICH estimates costs of approximately \$328,000 in the first year and \$312,000 annually thereafter for 2.0 PY of staff to set and measure specified progress goals, provide technical assistance, and coordinate funding, policy, and practice efforts specifically targeting survivors of domestic violence, their families, and unaccompanied women. (General Fund)
- Unknown significant reimbursable mandate costs for cities and counties to coordinate with victim service providers, conduct additional analysis, collect and incorporate data, and take other specified actions to ensure specific supports are developed to address the needs of families, people attempting to flee domestic violence, and unaccompanied women. Costs would be subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates, should a local agency file a successful claim for state reimbursement.
- Unknown additional General Fund cost pressures to provide additional resources to cities, counties, and CoCs to support the development and maintenance of specified data systems, and to provide additional resources to Cal-ICH to provide funding for technical assistance to support the development of local programs and plans.

Background: Existing law establishes Cal-ICH (formerly the Housing Coordinating and Financing Council) within the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency, to oversee the implementation of "Housing First" policies, guidelines, and regulations, and to develop policies and identify resources, benefits, and services to prevent and work toward ending homelessness in California. Existing law establishes the goals for Cal-ICH, including: identification of resources and services to prevent and end homelessness; creating partnerships among local, state, and federal entities to arrive at strategies to end homelessness, coordinating existing homelessness funding; making policy and procedural recommendations to the Legislature; and creating a Homeless

Data Integration System (HDIS). As the state's homelessness crisis has persisted, the role of Cal-ICH has significantly expanded to include the administration of programs dedicated to addressing homelessness.

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers the Continuum of Care Program as part of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This competitive grant program is designed to encourage cities and counties to address the problems of housing and homelessness in a coordinated and strategic fashion. The fundamental components of a continuum of care include prevention, outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing, permanent supportive housing, and supportive services. Among other requirements, the state's 44 continuums of care (CoCs) must track, coordinate services for, and collect anonymous data on the homeless clients served within the continuum and maintain the data in a homeless management information system (HMIS). Additionally, CoCs must conduct the Housing Inventory Count (HIC), which is a point-in-time inventory of programs that provide beds and units dedicated to serving individuals experiencing homelessness.

Cal-ICH recently launched a state HDIS system that captures the data from local HMIS, and all 44 CoCs have entered into contracts to provide their HMIS data to Cal-ICH. HDIS is intended to give the state a more accurate picture of the local homelessness response system and inform the state's response to homelessness.

To help address the persistent homelessness crisis, the state has increased funding for various homelessness programs in recent years, allocating \$2.65 billion to Cal-ICH homelessness programs from 2018-19 to 2021-22. The largest of these programs is the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention Program (HHAPP), which provides block grants to large cities, counties, CoCs, and tribal governments, for a variety of solutions for those experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, such as rapid rehousing, operating subsidies, street outreach, services coordination, delivery of permanent and innovative housing solutions, and homelessness prevention. The state has also invested billions more for other housing and homelessness programs in other state agencies. This includes Homekey, a program the California Department of Housing and Community Development administers to purchase and rehabilitate housing, including hotels, motels, vacant apartment buildings, and other types of housing, and convert them into permanent, long-term housing for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. The state allocated \$2.25 billion to Homekey between 2018-19 and 2021-22.

According to sources cited in the Housing Committee analysis of this bill, unaccompanied, homeless women are not required to be tracked under current federal law, however counties like Los Angeles and San Bernardino have recently done so. In 2020, there were over 13,500 unaccompanied women in Los Angeles, amounting to 65% of all unhoused women. Around half of this population reported domestic violence or intimate partner violence. According to the state HDIS, 18% of homeless people reported experiencing domestic violence. This is voluntary information given to providers that use HMIS, which often does not include domestic violence service providers, so it is probably an undercount. In 2019-20, California Office of Emergency Services' Domestic Violence (DV) Assistance Program served almost 19,000 individuals in their shelters, which accounted for over 600,000 nights, but there were still almost

28,000 unmet requests. For domestic violence and intimate partner violence survivors who recently left abusers, the need for housing is one of the most significant concerns.

Confidentiality is of utmost importance to survivors and programs supporting them because survivors often have to worry about their abusers trying to find them. Because of this, the data collected is aggregated. However, this means that client-level data for domestic violence survivors is not incorporated into the federal HMIS. This is the primary system that the state uses to collect information for its HDIS, and HDIS helps Cal-ICH plan for future homelessness interventions. Because domestic violence survivor data is not incorporated into the state HMIS, survivors may not be fully considered in the State's homelessness response.

Proposed Law: SB 914 would require cities, counties, and CoCs receiving state funding to address homelessness on or after January 1, 2023 to do the following:

- Take specific steps to ensure that the needs of victim service providers and survivors of violence, and a gendered analysis of the causes and consequences of homelessness, are incorporated into homelessness planning and responses.
- Include families, people fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, and unaccompanied women within the vulnerable populations for whom specific supports are developed to maintain homeless services and housing delivery.
- Ensure that analyses and goals related to addressing homelessness are developed in conjunction with victim service providers and will do the following:
 - Address the specific needs of families, people fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, and unaccompanied women, without including certain data measures into HMIS in accordance with federal policies.
 - Incorporate aggregate data from victim services providers and other data sources into any local landscape analysis that assesses the current number of people experiencing homelessness and existing local programs that address homelessness.
 - Address the safety and wellness of people experiencing homelessness in encampments, including the risk of sexual violence and domestic violence.
 - Include victim service providers in the responses to family homelessness.
 - Address the disparate racial and gender outcomes in accessing and maintaining services and housing.
 - Address the nexus of homelessness and justice-involvement, particularly for women and survivors of domestic violence.
 - Disaggregate the number of beds provided by victim services providers and the number of beds available for women, transgender and gender-nonconforming persons when assessing the number of available shelter beds in the city, county, or region served by a CoC.
- Specify that victim service providers must not be expected or required to enter data into HDIS or HMIS, as specified by federal policies.
- Authorize cities, counties, and CoCs receiving funding to support HDIS and HMIS to use those funds to support the development and maintenance of comparable databases.
- Require Cal-ICH to set specific goals, define outcome measures, collect data, and measure progress toward the goals to prevent and end homelessness among domestic violence survivors and their children, and unaccompanied women. The

goals, which must be established by January 1, 2025 and updated every two years thereafter, must include the following:

- Measurably decreasing the numbers of those persons experiencing homelessness.
- Decreasing the duration and frequency of homelessness among those populations.
- Decreasing barriers to services by promoting cross-system partnerships to expedite access to social services, domestic violence services, regional center services, housing services, and mental health services.
- Require Cal-ICH, when funding is available, to provide technical assistance to cities, counties, and CoCs to support the development of local programs and plans that address the needs of domestic violence victims and their children, and the needs of unaccompanied women.

Related Legislation: SB 678 (Rubio), which was held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee's Suspense File last year, would have established "unaccompanied women" as a sub-population of the state's homelessness population and required the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council to set measurable goals to prevent and end homelessness among unaccompanied women in the state.

Staff Comments: In addition to Cal-ICH's administrative costs and potentially reimbursable mandate costs noted above, the bill would create additional cost pressures. Specifically, the bill would allow cities, counties, and CoCs to use funds provided for HMIS and HDIS systems to also be used to develop and maintain comparable databases. By authorizing additional use for those funds the bill creates cost pressures to provide additional resources for data management. In addition, the bill requires Cal-ICH to provide additional technical support to cities, counties, and CoCs in the development of local programs to address the needs of targeted populations. By specifying that Cal-ICH perform this new function when funding is available, the bill creates cost pressures to provide additional funding in the future for that purpose.

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