February 25, 2022

The Honorable Sydney Kamlager  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4

The Honorable Wendy Carrillo  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4

Honorable Members  
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4

Honorable Members  
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4

Re: Request to Permanently Fund the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program

Dear Chairs and Members of the Budget Subcommittees,

A statewide coalition of the undersigned organizations led by John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) respectfully requests that the Legislature reduce youth homelessness in California by making the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program permanent. HHAP is an effective, flexible local program that has significantly assisted homeless youth in California. JBAY has issued three publications on HHAP and its predecessor, the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP). The specific benefits to homeless youth identified in these publications include:

**Increased investment in youth homelessness:** California has long struggled to address youth homelessness. Attempts to address it have historically focused on establishing a separate program, disconnected from larger state investments for adults. HHAP took a different approach, integrating funding for youth homelessness into larger state investments by establishing a 10% set-aside. This has significantly increased state investment in youth homelessness, from $1 million annually prior to HEAP and HHAP to $200 million with the most recent one-time investment in HHAP.

**Integration of youth into local homeless response network:** By requiring local jurisdictions to spend 10% of HHAP funds on youth homelessness, HHAP has integrated youth into local homeless response systems. Youth providers are now “at the table” and accessing HHAP alongside adult providers. In the 2019 publication on the impact of the youth set-aside in HEAP, 44% of jurisdictions indicated that their CoC awarded funding to youth providers that had never-before received CoC funding.¹

**Increased local understanding of youth homelessness:** HHAP has increased local understanding and awareness of youth homelessness. The California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Cal ICH) reported that the youth set-aside led to a renewed engagement around what unique services youth experiencing homelessness need, and as a result, formed new partnerships around providing and expanding services.² Rounds 3 and 4 of HHAP require local Homeless Action Plans, which will further incorporate youth into local homelessness planning.

**Expansion of the continuum of housing options for youth:** Like adults, youth experiencing homelessness need a range of housing and service interventions—there is no “one size fits all.” HHAP has enabled jurisdictions to fund a range of interventions based on local needs, including shelter and navigation centers, rental assistance and Rapid Rehousing, outreach

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¹ For more information on the publication, see: [source link]

² For more information on the report, see: [source link]
and coordination, prevention and shelter diversion, permanent housing, and more. This is a significant improvement from prior to HHAP, when a community commonly had a single “youth program.” Additionally, Cal ICH reports that HHAP grantees are creating new partnerships with universities and community colleges to reach college students experiencing homelessness, a hidden population that has hit crisis levels of homelessness in recent years.iii

Comprehensive assistance to youth experiencing homelessness: Many youth housing programs have very narrow eligibility criteria. For example, the state’s Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus) provides supportive housing to youth who were in foster care at age 18, making youth who exited foster care at an earlier age ineligible, along with homeless youth who were never in foster care. While well-intended, narrow eligibility criteria such as these often leave youth without the assistance they require because they do not fit in the right “box.” HHAP has no such restrictions and provides communities with a flexible tool to address the diverse experiences of youth experiencing homelessness, including youth who identify as LGBTQ, are survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, and young parents, among others.

Locals support youth set-asides: Representatives from local jurisdictions have expressed support for the youth set-aside approach and regard it as an effective way to meet the needs of homelessness youth. In 2019, JBAY surveyed CoCs and large cities about the effectiveness of the youth set-aside in HEAP; 100% of the CoCs and large cities interviewed indicated that a youth set-aside was essential.iv Without it, homeless youth would not have received an equitable share of HEAP funding.

While HHAP represents significant progress for youth experiencing homelessness in California, the housing and supportive services made possible by it will end in 2027 when HHAP expires. These local programs must be supported with a long-term, sustainable funding source. Given HHAP’s success, we strongly recommend that it serve this important role.

Thank you for being a champion for California’s youth and young adults. We request that the Legislature build on this momentum and consider how California can deepen its commitment to ending homelessness by making HHAP a permanent program in the upcoming budget year.

Sincerely,

John Burton Advocates for Youth
3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic
Abode Services
Alternative Family Services
Antelope Valley Domestic Violence Council
Bill Wilson Center
California Alliance of Child & Family Services
California Youth Connection
Casa de Amparo
Children Now
Covenant House California
Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley
First Place for Youth
Five Keys Schools and Programs
GLIDE
Hillsides
Hope Solutions
Jovenes, Inc.
Kamali'i Foster Family Agency, Inc.
Mesa
National Center for Youth Law
New Alternatives, Inc.
North County Lifeline
Northern California Youth and Family Programs
Operation SafeHouse
Orangewood Foundation
Public Counsel Law Center
Redwood Community Action Agency
Sanctuary of Hope
St. Anne's Family Services
StarVista
Sycamores
Tahoe Youth and Family Services
The Village Family Services
TLC Child & Family Services
TruEvolution
Vacaville Solano Services Corporation
Volunteers of America Los Angeles
Waking the Village
Walden Family Services
Youth Alliance
Youth Law Center

Cc:  Chris Woods, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
     Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
     Jason Sisney, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
     Kelsy Castillo, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
     Jessica Bartholow, Office of Senator Skinner
     Tania Dikho, Office of Assembly Member Ting
     Genevieve Morelos, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4
     James Hacker, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4
     Chantelle Denny, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
     Joe Shinstock, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
     Eric Dietz, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
     Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office
     Angela Short, Legislative Analyst’s Office
     Lourdes Morales, Legislative Analyst’s Office
     Jason Elliot, Office of the Governor
     Lourdes Castro Ramirez, California Business Consumer Services and Housing Agency
     Teresa Calvert, Department of Finance
     Kris Cook, Department of Finance
     Chris Hill, Department of Finance
     Brittany Thompson, Department of Finance


iii Ibid. Page 49.