

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 794

(Senator Reilly)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Appropriations

**Maryland Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adult Count
Demonstration Project**

This bill establishes a Maryland Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adult Count Demonstration Project that is overseen by a coordinating entity selected and monitored by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The purpose of the project is to conduct data collection and analysis to determine the number and characteristics of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in jurisdictions served by specified Continuums of Care. The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) must provide specified data- and mapping-related assistance. A report on the results of the project must be submitted to the General Assembly by September 30, 2017.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2014, but is contingent on receipt of funding through an appropriation in the State budget or through non-State sources to select a coordinating entity to oversee the project. If notice of the receipt of such funding is not received by the Department of Legislative Services by June 30, 2018, the bill is null and void.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures may increase by more than \$100,000 over the course of FY 2015 through 2018 for the cost of contractual services of a coordinating entity. The FY 2015 budget includes \$200,000 in general funds to administer the project, contingent on the enactment of this bill or HB 794.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local government finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: DHCD must select and monitor a coordinating entity to oversee the Maryland Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adult Count Demonstration Project through a competitive request for proposal or by sole source contract. The coordinating entity must determine the number and characteristics of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in at least the following Continuums of Care established under Subtitle C of Title IV of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: (1) MD 501 – Baltimore City Continuum of Care; (2) MD 503 – Annapolis/Anne Arundel County Continuum of Care; (3) MD 505 – Baltimore County Continuum of Care; (4) MD 512 – Hagerstown/Washington County Continuum of Care; (5) MD 513 – Wicomico/Somerset/Worcester County Continuum of Care; and (6) MD 600 – Prince George’s County Continuum of Care. To determine the number of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in each jurisdiction, the coordinating entity, in partnership with Continuums of Care and local communities, must:

- utilize data on the number of homeless students in public schools reported under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;
- conduct a street count of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults;
- conduct a service provider count of unaccompanied homeless youth; and
- conduct qualitative data collection, including surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews.

The coordinating entity must work with local communities to tailor data collection methodology, as appropriate. Any survey conducted must include a uniform set of questions but may include additional questions if the additional questions are agreed on by the local communities and the coordinating entity.

The methods of data collection must employ promising practices, including those identified through the federal Youth Count! Pilot Project, including employing youth outreach workers, using magnet events, and providing stipends to encourage participation. Data collection must coincide with the end of the K-12 school year and the reporting of data under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. To protect the anonymity of youth participants and avoid duplication, the coordinating entity must assign each youth participant a unique identifier that does not reveal the participant’s identity.

MDP must (1) assist with presurvey data collection consultation and mapping support; (2) analyze and compile data after the survey is completed; and (3) provide a technical review of draft reports.

DHCD and MDP must make every effort to identify non-State sources of funding for the project, including applying for federal or university grants and partnering with private entities to share the cost.

Current Law/Background: Chapters 544 and 545 of 2013 established the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth to compile information on and identify the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth, identify gaps in the programs and resources currently available to meet those needs, and collect and compile data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in the State. For the purposes of the task force, “unaccompanied homeless youth” is defined as an individual who is between the ages of 14 and 25 years; lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The task force’s report refers to unaccompanied homeless youth as a “highly vulnerable population of young people who are on their own and without a home during a critical period of their psychological, emotional, social, educational, and career development.”

The task force’s report indicates that “[r]eliable data on the prevalence and characteristics of homeless youth in Maryland is lacking, although existing data suggest that youth homelessness is a growing problem in the [S]tate.” For various reasons, the homeless youth population has been historically undercounted in efforts to quantify the homeless population at the local, State, and national levels. With respect to obtaining better data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in the State, among other things, the task force recommended that the General Assembly develop a demonstration project to incorporate practices and strategies developed in the federal Youth Count! initiative into local counts of the broader homeless population (Point-in-Time counts, conducted at least every two years on a single night in January). Youth Count! was launched by a federal interagency workgroup to develop promising strategies for counting unaccompanied homeless youth in conjunction with local Point-in-Time counts.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) collects data on homeless students pursuant to reporting requirements under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. MSDE reported that local school systems identified more than 14,691 homeless students during the 2011-2012 school year, up from approximately 13,000 two years earlier.

DHCD indicates that Continuums of Care are coalitions of governments and nonprofits that coordinate their activities and roles in supporting households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Continuums of Care apply directly to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for annual funding for homeless and transitional housing services.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures for DHCD may increase by more than \$100,000 over the course of fiscal 2015 through 2018, with those costs likely being incurred in only one or two of those fiscal years, depending on when the project is undertaken. This estimate accounts for contractual services costs of the selected coordinating entity that are not covered by non-State funding sources; this analysis assumes that some of the funding comes from non-State sources. The full cost of the contractual services of the selected coordinating entity is expected to be approximately \$175,000, which assumes that some level of volunteer assistance is available in the affected jurisdictions to assist with field surveys.

MDP can provide the specified data- and mapping-related assistance with existing resources.

The fiscal 2015 budget includes \$200,000 in general funds to administer the project, contingent on the enactment of this bill or HB 794.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 794 (Delegate M. Washington, *et al.*) - Appropriations.

Information Source(s): Department of Housing and Community Development, Maryland Department of Planning, Department of Human Resources, Governor's Office, Baltimore City, Wicomico County, Department of Legislative Services

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