

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1036
Appropriations

(Delegate M. Washington, *et al.*)

Finance

Human Services - Interagency Council on Homelessness

This bill repeals the Governor's Advisory Board on Homelessness and establishes an Interagency Council on Homelessness. Provisions relating to a shelter, nutrition, and service program for homeless individuals and families, which the advisory board is responsible for coordinating and monitoring, are also repealed. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) must provide staff assistance to the Interagency Council on Homelessness and is required to adopt regulations to govern the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs to make homelessness rare and, if it occurs, of brief duration.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2014.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Although the bill modifies statutory organization and authority relating to State efforts to address homelessness, the bill does not have a direct, material impact on State finances.

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

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The Interagency Council on Homelessness must:

- coordinate State policy and working relationships among State, local, and nonprofit agencies concerning efforts to remedy and prevent homelessness;
- coordinate data sharing between local Continuums of Care (regional or local planning bodies that coordinate housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals);
- coordinate outreach to each Continuum of Care to develop joint strategies that impact State and federal funding efforts to remedy and prevent homelessness;
- determine comprehensive and effective collaborative strategies and best practices for remediation and prevention of homelessness in the State, in particular addressing the differing needs of the State's geographic areas;
- review and analyze the need for and availability of affordable and accessible housing resources to address the needs of homeless individuals throughout the State;
- recommend changes necessary to alleviate or prevent homelessness, including making recommendations annually to the General Assembly and appropriate State agencies and organizations regarding effective policies, effective distribution of resources, and access to available services and programs;
- identify supportive services for special populations, including veterans, youth, families, and individuals with behavioral health problems;
- disseminate information and educate the public about the prevalence and causes of and responses to homelessness; and
- solicit input from the advocacy community, the business community, the faith community, and consumers regarding policy and program development.

Members of the council do not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses.

Current Law: The Governor is authorized to establish a shelter, nutrition, and service program for homeless individuals and families to provide facilities or programs that offer and provide (1) crisis and transition shelter, proper nutrition, and adequate services to homeless individuals and families and (2) services to prevent individuals and families in a housing crisis from becoming homeless. The Governor's Advisory Board on Homelessness must:

- advise DHR on the adoption of regulations to design and administer the shelter, nutrition, and service program for homeless individuals and families;
- coordinate and monitor the operation of the program;
- propose annually to DHR a budget and a funding request for the program;
- advise DHR on (1) a plan to serve homeless individuals; (2) the distribution of funds; (3) the effectiveness of programs; and (4) the needs of the homeless;

- make recommendations to DHR on the allocation of funding among programs and areas of the State; and
- report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on the activities of the program, including financial reports, advisory board actions, distribution of funds, and service successes and failures.

DHR also has specified responsibilities including contracting with nonprofit organizations to operate the shelter, nutrition, and service program for homeless individuals and families, establishing other specified programs, and collecting regional data on the number of homeless individuals and families that receive services under the programs.

Background: The existing Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness was established in 2002 (by Executive Order 01.01.2002.14) to, among other things, coordinate State policy regarding the homeless. The council's membership and responsibilities are similar to the membership and responsibilities of the Interagency Council on Homelessness created under this bill, but with certain differences, including additional responsibilities of the council created under the bill to (1) coordinate local and nonprofit agency efforts in conjunction with State efforts to address homelessness and (2) identify supportive services for special populations, including veterans, youth, families, and individuals with behavioral health problems.

The Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness' 2013 annual report and DHR's *2012 Annual Report on Homelessness*, submitted in June 2013 on behalf of the Governor's Advisory Board on Homelessness, indicate that homelessness is a complex social and public health crisis that results primarily from four factors: lack of affordable housing; lack of affordable health care; low incomes; and lack of comprehensive services. According to the reports, homeless population counts conducted by Maryland's 16 Continuums of Care, while subject to data integrity concerns, counted 8,205 Marylanders experiencing homelessness in 2013. The majority of the resources invested in the State and the work taking place to address homelessness occurs locally. DHR provided approximately \$5.5 million in fiscal 2013 to the State's Continuum of Care organizations and local government agencies.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 796 (Senator Madaleno, *et al.*) - Finance.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Resources; Governor's Office; Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Montgomery, and St. Mary's counties; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510