

Chapter 544

(Senate Bill 764)

AN ACT concerning

Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Task Force; prohibiting a member of the Task Force from receiving certain compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses; establishing the duties of the Task Force; requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain date; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.

Preamble

WHEREAS, Each year, over 1.6 million youth throughout the nation, and an increasing number of youth in Maryland, find themselves without stable housing and outside the care of a parent or guardian; and

WHEREAS, Many of these youth have become homeless and unaccompanied due to being rejected by their families because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, physical or sexual abuse, or severe conflict in the home, or because they have aged out of the foster care system without the skills and resources to support themselves; and

WHEREAS, Unaccompanied homeless youth are a largely invisible population, most of whom are “couch surfing” with friends and extended family, living on the streets, or squatting in vacant buildings; and

WHEREAS, Unaccompanied homeless youth are disproportionately likely to turn to delinquency, become victims of crime, commit suicide, suffer from physical and mental health impairments, engage in risky sexual behaviors, and drop out of school in order to survive on the street; and

WHEREAS, There is a *general* lack of *knowledge about the* public and private sector programs and resources available to assist unaccompanied homeless youth, ~~including a lack~~ *such as the availability* of shelter and permanent housing; case management; medical, mental health, and substance abuse treatment; education and

job training; food and clothing; financial counseling; legal advice and representation; and other supportive services; and

WHEREAS, ~~The foster care system is~~ Current systems are not adequately meeting the needs of many unaccompanied homeless youth, particularly those who do not come to the attention of ~~child welfare~~ child-serving agencies, those who are ~~too old to enter foster care~~ not eligible for existing programs and services, those who have lived independently for so long that they are unlikely to form successful relationships with ~~foster or adoptive parents~~ parental figures, and those who have had particularly negative experiences while in ~~foster~~ congregate care; and

WHEREAS, These youth are urgently in need of safe, secure, affordable, and stable housing as well as supportive services that will prevent them from becoming permanently homeless and, instead, set them on a path towards self-sufficiency; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

(a) In this section, “unaccompanied homeless youth” means an individual who:

- (1) is between the ages of 14 and 25 years;
- (2) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- (3) is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

(b) There is a Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.

~~(b)~~ (c) The Task Force consists of the following members:

(1) one member of the Senate ~~Budget and Taxation~~ Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(2) one member of the House Appropriations Committee, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates;

(3) the Secretary of Housing and Community Development, or the Secretary’s designee;

(4) the Secretary of Human Resources, or the Secretary’s designee;

(5) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary’s designee;

(6) the Secretary of Juvenile Services, or the Secretary's designee; ~~and~~

(7) the State Superintendent of Schools, or the State Superintendent's designee; and

~~(7)~~ (8) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

(i) one representative from the Governor's Office for Children;

~~(ii) two representatives from the State Department of Education;~~

~~(ii)~~ ~~(iii)~~ (ii) two representatives from the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative, one of whom is a service provider and one of whom is a youth or young adult who has experienced homelessness;

~~(iii)~~ ~~(iv)~~ (iii) two representatives from the Prince George's County Homeless Youth Work Group, one of whom is a service provider and one of whom is a youth or young adult who has experienced homelessness; and

~~(iv)~~ ~~(v)~~ (iv) one representative from the Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition.

~~(e) The Task Force shall elect a chair from among its members.~~

(d) The representative from the Governor's Office for Children shall serve as Chair of the Task Force.

~~(d)~~ ~~(e)~~ The ~~Department of Housing and Community Development Health and Mental Hygiene~~ Governor's Office for Children shall provide staff for the Task Force.

~~(e)~~ (f) A member of the Task Force:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

~~(f)~~ (g) The Task Force shall:

(1) compile existing information on and identify ~~and study~~ the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth ~~between 13 and 25 years of age~~, and ~~evaluate~~ identify the public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet those needs;

~~(2)~~ (2) *identify gaps in public and private sector programs and resources currently available to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth;*

~~(2)~~ (3) collect and ~~evaluate~~ compile data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in the State, including *the causes of homelessness in this population* and the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in each jurisdiction of the State;

~~(3)~~ (4) make recommendations on:

(i) legislation and policy initiatives to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State; and

(ii) funding requirements and budgetary priorities to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State; and

~~(4)~~ (5) make recommendations on any other relevant issues or considerations identified by the Task Force.

~~(e)~~ (h) On or before ~~December~~ November 1, 2013, the Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2013. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the end of June 30, 2014, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved by the Governor, May 16, 2013.