

## The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2017 (H.R. 1511/S. 611)

Homelessness jeopardizes the health and well-being of millions of children and youth, putting future generations at risk of adult homelessness. Communities need to be able to use HUD U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Homeless Assistance funding more flexibly, effectively, and appropriately to meet the needs of children, youth, and families.

**Family and youth homelessness are at record levels, forcing children and youth into a variety of unstable and unsafe living situations that are not included in HUD's definition of homelessness.**

- Public schools identified 1.3 million children and youth, preK-12, in the 2015-2016 school year, an increase of 34% since the end of the recession.
- An estimated 1.2 million children under age 6 experience homelessness over the course of a year.
- 4.2 million youth and young adults age 13-25 experience homelessness on their own over the course of a year.
- Often, families and youth must stay in motels, or with other people temporarily, because there is no family or youth shelter in the community, shelters are full, or shelter policies exclude them.
- These living situations are not covered by HUD's definition of homelessness, despite the fact that they are precarious, crowded, unstable, and often unsafe, putting children and youth at high risk of harm, victimization, trafficking, and violence.
- Many youth first experience homelessness earlier in their childhoods, while youth homelessness is the single strongest pathway to adult homelessness. These pathways must be disrupted if we are to truly prevent and end homelessness.

**The Homeless Children and Youth Act will allow communities to confront this crisis.**

HUD's narrow definition of homelessness leaves out many of our country's most vulnerable children and youth, thereby restricting communities' ability to effectively address youth and family homelessness. The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2017 (H.R. 1511/S. 611) provides flexibility to local communities to use available resources to meet their most urgent needs – especially those of children, youth, and families. It will help prevent homeless children and youth from becoming tomorrow's homeless adults.

- The Act aligns HUD Homeless Assistance definitions of homelessness with those of other federal programs, allowing communities to serve the most vulnerable children, youth and families no matter where they happen to lay their heads.
- Whether or not newly eligible children and youth receive HUD Homeless Assistance services will depend on local needs assessments, and the same "vulnerability" indices (including age-appropriate criteria) used currently to prioritize people for assistance.
- Communities will be allowed to provide housing and services tailored to the unique needs of each homeless population, including housing models that are most appropriate for youth and for families.
- The Act will increase the visibility of homeless children, youth and families, thus helping communities leverage and attract more public/private resources to address homelessness.
- Communities that establish coordinated assessment systems will be required to ensure that those most in need of assistance receive it, using age-appropriate criteria to assess the safety and needs of children and youth.
- By aligning HUD homeless assistance with other infant, child and youth serving systems, the Act will help ensure that children, youth, and families receive all services for which they are eligible, including child care, education, and the supportive services they need to obtain decent jobs and afford housing as adults.