



national policy and advocacy council on homelessness

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H.R. 840 – The HEARTH Act of 2007

BACKGROUND:

On Tuesday, February 6, the “Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH Act),” H.R. 840, was introduced by U.S. Representatives Julia Carson (D-7th/IN), Geoff Davis (R-4th/KY), Rick Renzi (R-1st/AZ) and Barbara Lee (D-9th/CA). The HEARTH Act reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs that are administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HEARTH now has 64 additional co-sponsors.

The HEARTH Act provides greater decision making at the local level, more closely aligns the HUD definition of homelessness with other federal agency definitions (including the U.S. Department of Education), expands resources for supportive services, provides a framework for greater homelessness prevention activities, and allows communities the flexibility to implement a range of housing solutions. A summary of key provisions is included below.

KEY HEARTH ACT PROVISIONS:

- Consolidates all HUD McKinney-Vento housing programs (except Emergency Shelter Grants) into one competitive program with a broad set of eligible activities, including homelessness prevention, permanent or transitional housing for any homeless population, and supportive services.
- Allows communities to prioritize particular housing and services initiatives based on demonstrated local need, not because of national priorities set by HUD that often do not match local needs.
- Aligns the HUD definition of who is homeless more closely with the definition used by the U.S. Department of Education by including people who are living in doubled-up situations or in hotels / motels. This change will make many more children, youth, and families eligible for HUD homeless assistance, providing communities with the flexibility to serve the people who are homeless within their borders.
- Protects victims of domestic violence by prohibiting the disclosure of any information collected by a housing or social service provider that could identify them, and prevents homelessness by permitting victims of domestic violence who may be in danger to immediately move to a safer living situation.
- Ensures that communities wishing to prioritize housing and services for homeless persons living on the streets for a long period of time are free to target dollars to that population, without codifying a definition of “chronic homelessness” or a set of incentives designed to end “chronic homelessness.”
- Requires a 25% match for all housing and supportive services, but permits the match to be met either in cash or with an in-kind contribution.