

- SUBJECT:** Authorizing a study on homeless youth
- COMMITTEE:** Human Services — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Raymond, N. Gonzalez, Fallon, Naishtat, Rose, Scott Turner
1 nay — Sanford
2 absent — Klick, Zerwas
- WITNESSES:** For — Duncan Cormie, Texas Network of Youth Services; Cathyleen Requejo; Daniel Williams, Equality Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Katherine Barillas, One Voice Texas; Christine Bryan, Clarity Child Guidance Center; Melody Chatelle, United Ways of Texas; Cidneye Godkin, Texas Homeless Network and Advocacy Outreach; Greg Hansch, National Alliance on Mental Illness Texas; Ashley Harris, Texans Care for Children; Jerretta Jimmerson-Davenport; Marshall Kenderdine, Texas Pediatric Society; Stephanie LeBleu, Texas CASA; Katharine Ligon, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Benet Magnuson, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition; Ken Martin, Texas Homeless Network; Sandra Martinez, Methodist Healthcare Ministries; Beth Rolingson, Advocacy Outreach; Jason Sabo, Children at Risk; Dave Schrandt, NAEHCY; Chuck Smith, Equality Texas; Lee Spiller, Citizens Commission on Human Rights)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Brooke Boston, Department of Housing and Community Affairs; Elizabeth Kromrei, Department of Family and Protective Services)
- BACKGROUND:** Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. § 6399), a “migratory child” means a child who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker or a migratory fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months has:
- moved from one school district to another;
 - moved from one administrative area to another within such district in a state that has a single school district; or

- resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity.

DIGEST:

CSHB 2240 would require the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), in conjunction with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Texas Homeless Education Office, to conduct a study on homeless youth. The legislation authorizing the study would expire on September 1, 2015.

The bill would define a homeless youth as a person who:

- was younger than 25 years old;
- lacked a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
- had a primary nighttime residence that was a public or private place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans;
- was living in a car, park, other public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting; or
- was a migratory child who qualified as homeless under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

In conducting the study, the TDHCA would:

- collect data on the number of homeless youth in Texas;
- examine the needs of homeless youth and how current programs were meeting those needs;
- identify any funding that might be available to provide services to homeless youth; and
- submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2014, including a summary of the study's results and recommendations for legislation necessary to provide services and assistance to homeless youth.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2013.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 2240 would facilitate collaboration among four state agencies to help ensure that all Texas children were healthy, could attend school, and

had a place to live. By requiring TDHCA to work with DFPS, TEA, and the Texas Homeless Education Office to conduct a statewide study on homeless youth, the bill would give all service providers the information they needed to better understand where they could more efficiently concentrate their efforts.

The bill would address a pressing need. National statistics show homeless youth are vulnerable to human trafficking, low educational attainment, mental health issues, and other negative outcomes associated with lacking a safe and stable living environment.

Currently, state agencies and nonprofit or faith-based service providers have to rely on anecdotal evidence, national statistics, or a patchwork of local studies to inform their work. Point-in-time counts, which aim to tally the number of homeless on the street, do not always provide an accurate assessment of the numbers and needs of homeless youth, especially if the youth are living in a shelter or otherwise indoors. A statewide study on homeless youth would ensure that state and nonprofit dollars were spent efficiently to better improve outcomes for homeless youth.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The bill is unnecessary because local and national organizations already gather this information through point-in-time counts and other studies. The state does not need to duplicate the work of nonprofits and faith-based organizations.