

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6647

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As of March 1, 2016

**Title:** An act relating to responding to the crisis of homelessness in Washington.

**Brief Description:** Responding to the crisis of homelessness in Washington.

**Sponsors:** Senators Nelson, Hasegawa, Jayapal, Liias, Cleveland, Frockt, Rolfes, Hobbs, Billig, Carlyle, Chase, Takko, Keiser, Ranker, Darneille, McAuliffe, Fraser, Conway, Pedersen, Mullet, McCoy, Habib, Benton and Hargrove.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ways & Means: 3/02/16.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Julie Murray (786-7711)

**Background:** Budget Stabilization Account. In 2007, the voters ratified a constitutional amendment that created the Budget Stabilization Account (BSA) as Article VII, section 12 of the state Constitution. Each year, the State Treasurer must deposit 1 percent of general state revenues into the constitutionally created BSA. The term "general state revenues" is defined in the Constitution and is largely equivalent to the statutory State General Fund. In general, appropriations from the BSA require a three-fifths majority in each chamber of the Legislature, but in the case of a catastrophic event or low employment growth, the Legislature may appropriate from the BSA with a constitutional majority vote of each chamber.

Homeless Assistance Programs. The Department of Commerce (Commerce) manages a range of homeless assistance, prevention and housing programs. Those programs are funded from the State General Fund and document recording surcharges. Commerce programs include the following.

*Housing and Essential Needs Program (HEN).* The program pays rent directly to landlords for individuals who are unable to work for at least 90 days due to a temporary disability, as determined by the Department of Social and Health Services, and are homeless or at imminent documented risk of becoming homeless. The program also provides essential needs - e.g. toiletries, bus tokens) in addition to rent assistance.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

*The Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG.)* A single grant opportunity for county governments and other designated entities to receive state funding to support a system of prevention services, emergency shelters, transitional housing and temporary rent assistance for people facing homelessness.

*The Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs.* These provide services for youth and adults. Programs include:

- The Independent Youth Housing Program, which provides rental assistance and case management for eligible youth who have aged out of the state foster care system.
- Street Youth Services, which funds outreach to street youth to connect them to shelter and services.
- HOPE Beds, which are located in centers that provide voluntary temporary residential placements for youths under age 18. Youth undergo a comprehensive assessment in order to develop the best plan for the youth, with the focus on finding a permanent and stable home. The assessment includes gathering information on the youth's legal status and conducting a physical examination, a mental health and chemical abuse evaluation, and an educational evaluation of their basic skills, along with any learning disabilities or special needs.
- Crisis Residential Centers (CRCs), which are short-term, semi-secure and secure facilities for runaway youth and adolescents in conflict with their families. Counselors at a CRCs work with the family to resolve the immediate conflict and develop better ways of dealing with conflict in the future. The stated goal of CRCs is to reunite the family and youth whenever possible.

**Summary of Bill:** The Legislature finds that homelessness is a crisis across the state and declares the intention to work in concert with other governments and organizations to provide support and funds to increase services to homeless Washingtonians.

The Homeless Assistance Account is created as an appropriated account in the State Treasury. Expenditures from the account may be used only for housing assistance, support services, treatment for mental illness and/or chemical dependency, family services, and other purposes to address the state's homeless population.

\$86.8 million is appropriated for the 2015-2017 biennium from the BSA to the Homeless Assistance Account. No more than 1 percent of funds may be used for administrative purposes. Funds are distributed statewide as follows:

- \$4.6 million for services to homeless youth, including HOPE beds, Street Youth Services and funding for Substitute Senate Bill No. 6298 (homeless student stability and opportunity gap act);
- \$3 million for the CHG program;
- \$18.4 million for behavioral health housing and services to provide housing and stabilization services to the chronically homeless, mentally ill and chemically dependent; and
- \$60 million for sheltering, including emergency shelter, assistance to families in the Temporary Assistance for Need Families program and the HEN program.

\$100 million is appropriated for the 2015-2017 biennium from the BSA to the Housing Trust Fund to be distributed as follows:

- \$95 million must be used to for new construction, renovation, or conversion of existing housing stock for permanent supportive housing or other housing to assist people and families are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- \$5 million must be used to assist in operations and maintenance costs for affordable and supportive housing.

**Appropriation:** \$186.8 million from the Budget Stabilization Account.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on March 1, 2016.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.