



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ENDING HOMELESSNESS

December 31, 2019

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., Co-chair

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Co-chair

Members of the Legislative Policy Committee

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness is pleased to submit a summary report of its 2019 interim activities. This report also serves as the committee's annual report detailing the committee's fifth year of activity. The committee met four times this interim to explore a wide range of issues related to housing and social services for individuals experiencing homelessness. During the 2019 interim, the Workgroup to Study Shelter and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Minors, established by Chapter 553 of 2019, also met on related housing issues affecting youth in particular. The joint committee supports the activities and findings of this workgroup, which can be found in the workgroup's final report.

At the September 3 meeting, the joint committee heard a presentation on the legislation that was proposed or enacted during the 2019 session, including Chapter 553. The committee also heard from representatives of many State agencies that have an impact on homelessness in the State. Representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), the Department of Human Services, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) provided updates to the committee on efforts to reduce homelessness. For instance, DHCD discussed its implementation of the Homelessness Solutions Program, which is a consolidation of several homelessness grant programs, and the Ending Youth Homelessness Act.

On September 18, the joint committee heard from several members of the homelessness advocacy community. Representatives from the Maryland Alliance for the Poor discussed several issues, including its support for the increased use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits for affordable housing. Members of the Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake updated the joint committee on its group efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing in the State. Leaders from A Wider Circle provided a summary of their organization's efforts, including

providing workforce development and programming targeted to formerly homeless veterans. Finally, representatives of the Calvert County Detention Center provided an overview of the reentry process for inmates and their efforts to prevent homelessness among that population.

At the October 15 meeting, the joint committee heard presentations on many levels of the service system for homelessness and affordable housing, including federal, State, and local programs. A senior policy specialist from the National Conference of State Legislatures began the meeting with an overview of strategies that other states use to address homelessness. For example, many states provide housing subsidies, homelessness prevention, and rapid re-housing programs. Next, the committee heard an update from the Maryland Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) on its recent activities and recommendations. To learn more about service coordination at the local level, the committee heard presentations from representatives from three Continuums of Care (CoC) on funding availability and efforts to reduce homelessness in their communities. All three CoC representatives noted that their counties have local plans or goals focused on serving homeless veterans in particular. Finally, the executive director of Marian House in Baltimore City discussed how DHCD's recent changes to the Homelessness Solutions Program have reduced the State grant awards to the organization's transitional housing program.

The joint committee's meeting on October 30 examined federal programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), State programs for veterans experiencing homelessness, and a local program in Baltimore City supporting permanent housing. A HUD representative described competitive federal grant and demonstration programs that Maryland CoCs generally participate in directly to fund evidence-based approaches. The committee heard a presentation from the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs on recent point-in-time counts of veterans experiencing homelessness, activities of the ICH veterans workgroup, and programs providing outreach and benefits assistance. Advocates representing the Real Care Providers of Belvedere presented to the committee on challenges and barriers that individuals experiencing homelessness face to accessing safe housing services. The joint committee concluded the meeting by having a roundtable discussion of the members' recommendations and findings.

Based on witness testimonies and briefings given throughout the 2019 interim, the Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness recommends that the General Assembly, State agencies, and all relevant stakeholders consider the following actions related to affordable housing and homeless services, health and human services, and other policy and services areas.

Affordable Housing and Homeless Services

- Seek new funding opportunities from HUD, in addition to the funds and grants the State currently receives.
- Engage the State's federal delegation in partnerships with HUD to maximize federal funding and grant opportunities.

- Create incentives and requirements for developers located in opportunity zones to increase the supply of affordable housing units.
- Increase funding for the Rental Housing Program, Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, and Rental Housing Works Program.
- Create a State income tax credit for owners of qualified low-income housing projects.
- Support legislation that prohibits housing discrimination based on source of income.
- Create a property tax waiver for nonprofit groups while developing property for low-income housing.
- Create a funding stream that provides mortgages with interest-free rates for families that pay at least 30% of their total income on housing and do not make more than a set amount, and look at other states' experiences implementing similar programs, including how they guarantee participants' mortgages.
- Collaborate with all relevant stakeholders to design and adopt a systemic plan to end veteran homelessness in the State.

Health and Human Services

- Require the Health Services Cost Review Commission to review, study, and report on current practice, barriers, and recommendations regarding how hospitals participating in the State's Total Cost of Care Model are assisting those who are homeless at discharge so that health outcomes are optimized and readmission is avoided; this study should include, but not be limited to, respite care initiatives and housing placement.
- Investigate if MDH can amend the 1115 Medical Assistance (Medicaid) waiver to include more than supportive services to help increase housing opportunities for waiver recipients.
- Change the sanction system for Temporary Cash Assistance recipients with layered sanctions so that full-family housing is not jeopardized for any individual recipient's violations.

Other Policy and Service Areas

- Require State agencies providing workforce development and assistance to provide data on the housing status of the individuals they serve and develop more holistic services for those experiencing homelessness, or those at risk of becoming homeless.

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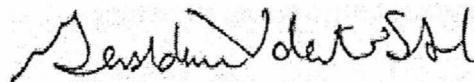
- Determine if existing workforce programs need to be expanded to offer hard skill training and transportation services, in addition to the soft skills training currently offered.
- Require local detention centers and DPSCS to collect data and report on the housing status of offenders, including individuals who are preparing to reenter the community and individuals on parole and probation.
- Examine the eligibility criteria for scholarship programs benefitting homeless individuals at higher education institutions to ensure that scholarships are not lost mid-year if a student secures temporary housing.

We thank the joint committee members for their participation, representatives of public and private organizations who kept us informed, and our committee staff for their support.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Washington
Senate Chair



Geraldine Valentino-Smith
House Chair

MLW:GVS/JAK:APW/km

cc: Members of the Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness
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