Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 57

Introduced by Senator Hurtado

August 18, 2021

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 57—Relative to Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 57, as introduced, Hurtado. Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month.

This measure would designate November 2021 as Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month and recognize the need for individuals, schools, communities, businesses, local governments, and the state to take action on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in California.

Fiscal committee: no.

WHEREAS, Runaway and homeless youth are young people 12 to 24 years of age, inclusive, who have the least access to essential opportunities and support; and

WHEREAS, The prevalence of runaways and homelessness among youth is staggering. Studies suggest that nationally between 1,600,000 and 2,800,000 youth up to 24 years of age experience homelessness every year, of which there is an overrepresentation, compared to the general youth population, of youth of color as well as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth; and

WHEREAS, Based on national surveys and California's youth population, an estimated 200,000 youth under 18 years of age and thousands more who are 18 to 24 years of age, inclusive, are homeless for one or more days each year; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2019 Point-in-Time homeless count showed the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in California was 11,993, and there were another 2,220 parenting youth and their children experiencing homelessness. A study released in November 2017 by the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall found 1 in 10 young adults between 18 and 25 years of age and, at least, 1 in 30 adolescents between 13 and 17 years of age experience homelessness over the course of a year; and

WHEREAS, The percentage of unaccompanied homeless youth who are unsheltered in California stands at 78.9 percent, which is the highest in the country. California also has 34 percent of the homeless youth population in the country, the largest number of homeless youth of any state; and

WHEREAS, Runaway and homeless youth flee conflict, abuse, neglect, or, increasingly, poverty in their homes. They have become disconnected from educational systems and the workforce and do not have the skills and financial resources to live on their own. The factors impacting youth homelessness are complex and differ from those impacting other homeless populations; and

WHEREAS, Runaway and homeless youth who live on the street are victims of physical abuse, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and crime in untold numbers. An estimated 300,000 youth are either victims or at risk of becoming victims of commercial and sexual exploitation each year, of which 60 percent of these victimized children are homeless; and

WHEREAS, Homeless youth tend to have started using drugs at a younger age, often before 15 years of age. Early drug use and abuse are predictive of serious adult addiction problems and long-term homelessness; and

WHEREAS, Youth who "age out" of the foster care system are at an increased risk of homelessness, and represent an estimated 20 percent of the 20,000 youth who leave foster care and are currently homeless; and

WHEREAS, These youth are on the street because they feel there are no other options open to them; and

WHEREAS, Providing safe, stable, and permanent housing for runaway and homeless youth is a family, community, state, and national priority, and homeless youth are considered one of the

unique populations in the homeless community by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness; and

WHEREAS, The future well-being of our state depends on the value we place on our youth and, in particular, on our actions to provide the most vulnerable young people in the state with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to find and maintain stable housing and to develop into healthy and productive adults; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic is being felt by youth through high unemployment rates and increased demand for youth-centered care and mental health services, technology, and access to hygiene, food, shelter, and safety; and

WHEREAS, The number of effective programs providing services and support to runaway and homeless youth in California is a fraction of what is needed to fully address the needs of these young people; only 22 out of California's 58 counties have programs for runaway and homeless youth; and

WHEREAS, The California Coalition for Youth has operated the California Youth Crisis Line (1-800-843-5200) 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for over 30 years as the state's only emergency response system for youth in crisis, which began offering chat-to-text counseling services in 2016; and

WHEREAS, November is National Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month; and

WHEREAS, The California Coalition for Youth, along with other community-based organizations, providers, and advocates, is sponsoring California's 10th annual Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month to increase awareness and action on behalf of youth at risk or currently living on the street; and

WHEREAS, Awareness of the tragedy of youth experiencing homelessness and its causes must be heightened to ensure greater support for effective programs aimed at preventing homelessness and helping youth remain off the streets; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes the need for individuals, schools, communities, businesses, local governments, and the state to take action on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature hereby designates the month of November 2021 as Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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