

Senate Bill 498

By: Senators Jackson of the 41st, Summers of the 13th and Robertson of the 29th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 12 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 commissions and other agencies, so as to create the Georgia Interagency Council for the
3 Homeless; to provide for the purpose, membership, and duties of such council; to provide for
4 reporting of activities; to provide for compensation; to provide for legislative findings; to
5 provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 The General Assembly finds:

9 (1) Every Georgian has the right to life, liberty, and property under the Constitution of the
10 State of Georgia;

11 (2) The protection of persons and property is the paramount duty of government;

12 (3) No Georgian shall be denied equal protection under the law;

13 (4) The government of the State of Georgia is instituted for the protection, security, and
14 benefit of the people;

15 (5) In 2022, the Georgia State Senate created a Study Committee on Unsheltered
16 Homelessness to study the issue, assess evidence for different policies, solicit input, and

develop recommendations for improvements to the law that would aid those experiencing homelessness;

(6) In 2022, the Georgia State Senate found that the state should continue to oppose the criminalization of homelessness, and the Study Committee on Unsheltered Homelessness did not recommend any legal action against unsheltered or sheltered homeless individuals based on housing status; and

(7) This Act reinforces the General Assembly's commitment to the safety and security of those state residents who remain unhoused.

SECTION 2.

Chapter 12 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to commissions and other agencies, is amended by adding a new article to read as follows:

"ARTICLE 9

50-12-140.

(a) There is created the Georgia Interagency Council for the Homeless for the purpose of ensuring a coordinated state-wide approach to addressing homelessness.

(b) As used in this Code section, the term 'council' means the Georgia Interagency Council for the Homeless.

(c) The council shall consist of the following 17 members who shall be appointed to serve at the pleasure of the Governor:

(1) One member from the Attorney General's office;

(2) One member from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities;

(3) One member from the Department of Corrections;

40 (4) One member from the Division of Aging Services within the Department of Human
41 Services;

42 (5) One member from the Governor's Office for Children and Families;

43 (6) One member from the Department of Veterans Service;

44 (7) One member from the Georgia Housing and Finance Authority;

45 (8) One member from the Department of Community Affairs;

46 (9) One member from the Department of Transportation;

47 (10) One member from the Department of Public Health;

48 (11) One member from the Department of Public Safety;

49 (12) Three members who have personally experienced homelessness; and

50 (13) Three members representing service providers to the homeless.

51 (d) A vacancy on the council shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment
52 was made.

53 (e) The Governor shall designate one of such appointed members to serve as the
54 chairperson of the council.

55 (f) The council shall:

56 (1) Survey current resources for services for the homeless in this state;

57 (2) Initiate an evaluation of the current and future needs for the services;

58 (3) Assist in coordinating and providing state-wide services for all homeless individuals
59 in this state;

60 (4) Increase the flow of information among separate providers and appropriate
61 authorities;

62 (5) Develop guidelines to monitor the provision of services for the homeless and the
63 methods of delivering those services;

64 (6) Coordinate with the Workforce Development Board, homeless shelters, and public
65 and private entities to provide homeless individuals information on services available to
66 assist them in obtaining employment and job training;

67 (7) Establish a central resource and information center for the homeless in this state;

68 (8) Coordinate state-wide efforts to combat the criminalization of homelessness; and

69 (9) Ensure that local or state-wide nonprofit organizations perform the duties under this
70 subsection that the council is unable to perform.

71 (g) The council, no later than October 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, shall submit to the
72 office of the Governor a report detailing the council's activities, findings, and any
73 recommendations. Any reports generated by the council shall be made available on an
74 annual basis by the department to the members of the General Assembly, all departments
75 and agencies of state government, all county and municipal governments, and members of
76 the general public by posting such reports on the appropriate state agency websites.

77 (h) Councilmembers shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be allowed
78 actual and necessary expenses in the performance of their duties. Citizen members shall
79 receive a daily expense allowance in the amount specified in subsection (b) of Code
80 Section 45-7-21 as well as the mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state
81 employees. If any members selected to serve on the council are state officials or are state
82 employees, they shall receive no compensation for their services on the council but shall
83 be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as members of the
84 council in the same manner as reimbursements are made in their capacity as state officials
85 or state employees. The funds necessary for the reimbursement of the expenses of state
86 officials and state employees shall come from funds appropriated to or otherwise available
87 to their respective departments."

88 **SECTION 3.**

89 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.