

Senate Bill 434

By: Senators Jackson of the 41st, Kirkpatrick of the 32nd, Jones II of the 22nd and Summers of the 13th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 5 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to children and youth services, so as to provide for the establishment of the Office
3 of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection within the Department of Community Affairs;
4 to provide for director; to provide for purpose; to provide for responsibilities; to provide for
5 annual reports; to provide for an advisory committee; to provide for membership, terms,
6 meetings, and compensation of such committee; to provide for related matters; to provide for
7 contingent effectiveness; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

9 SECTION 1.

10 Article 1 of Chapter 5 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
11 children and youth services, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

12 "49-5-26.

13 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

14 (1) 'Homeless youth' or 'youth experiencing homelessness' means a young person who
15 lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including a young person who:

16 (A) Due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason, is sharing the
17 housing of other persons;

18 (B) Due to lack of alternative adequate or permanent accommodations, is living in
19 motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds;

20 (C) Is living in an emergency or transition shelter, or has been abandoned at a hospital;

21 (D) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated
22 for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations;

23 (E) Is living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing,
24 bus or train stations, or similar settings; or

25 (F) Is a migratory young person living in circumstances described in subparagraphs (A)
26 through (E) of this paragraph.

27 (2) 'Office' means the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection.

28 (3) 'Young person' or 'youth' means an individual who is not more than 25 years of age.

29 (b) There is established within the Department of Community Affairs the Office of
30 Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection. The office shall be attached to such
31 department for administrative and operational purposes.

32 (c) The commissioner shall appoint a director to be responsible for the operations of the
33 office.

34 (d) The office shall be responsible for leading efforts relating to homeless youth and
35 improving the safety, health, and welfare of homeless youth in this state. Responsibilities
36 shall include, but shall not be limited to:

37 (1) Developing state-wide coordination across relevant state agencies, local
38 governments, and community partners to:

39 (A) Establish outcome measures and track the progress of measurable goals;

40 (B) Develop and implement data-sharing agreements consistent with state and federal
41 privacy laws to better understand causes of youth homelessness and ways to improve
42 coordination of services;

- 43 (C) Develop state-wide recommendations to close gaps in policy, funding, and services
44 throughout the state;
- 45 (D) Publish annual public reports summarizing progress, deficiencies, and
46 recommended actions to prevent youth homelessness; and
- 47 (E) Coordinate with child welfare, juvenile justice, education, behavioral health, and
48 other systems to prevent youth homelessness.
- 49 (2) Establishing programs that decrease the number of homeless youth in this state by
50 addressing the initial causes of homelessness;
- 51 (3) Establishing programs that increase permanent placement as defined in Code
52 Section 15-11-2 among homeless youth by decreasing length and occurrences of youth
53 homelessness caused by a youth's separation from family;
- 54 (4) Collecting county and state-wide data on the number of homeless youth, dependency
55 status, family reunification status, housing status, program participation, and runaway
56 status; and
- 57 (5) Establishing a comprehensive plan to encourage identification of youth experiencing
58 homelessness, promote family stability, and eliminate youth homelessness.
- 59 (e) By April 1 of the first full calendar year after the office becomes operational and
60 annually thereafter, the office shall publish and submit to the Governor, the Speaker of the
61 House of Representatives, the Lieutenant Governor, and the chairpersons of the House
62 Committee on Judiciary, House Committee on Judiciary Juvenile, House Committee on
63 Public and Community Health, and the Senate Children and Families Committee an annual
64 report which shall include for the previous calendar year:
- 65 (1) State-wide data trends relating to youth and young adults experiencing homelessness
66 and housing instability;
- 67 (2) Outcome measures and progress of measurable goals;
- 68 (3) Identified gaps in policy, funding, and services coordination; and
- 69 (4) Recommended legislative and budget actions to address such gaps.

- 70 (f) The office shall regularly consult with an advisory committee. The advisory committee
71 shall be staffed by the department and shall consist of 12 members to be appointed by the
72 Governor by January 1, 2027, as follows:
- 73 (1) Two members shall be licensed social workers;
74 (2) Two members shall be representatives of the Division of Family and Children
75 Services of the department;
76 (3) Two members shall be members of the House of Representatives;
77 (4) Two members shall be members of the Senate;
78 (5) Two members shall be youth who have experienced homelessness. Such members
79 shall be appointed in a manner that prioritizes representation from different regions of
80 this state and diverse experiences with regard to youth homelessness; and
81 (6) Two members shall be parents, legal guardians, or kinship caregivers who have
82 supported a young person who has experienced homelessness or housing instability, or
83 who serve as caregiver advocates with demonstrated experience supporting such families.
- 84 (g) Each member of the advisory committee shall serve a two-year term and until the
85 appointment and qualification of such member's successor.
- 86 (h) The advisory committee shall meet at least quarterly and at such other times as may
87 be called by the chairperson. The chairperson of the committee shall call an initial meeting
88 no later than 90 days after all appointments to the committee have been completed.
- 89 (i) Members of the committee shall not be compensated for their services on the committee
90 but may be reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses in the same manner as provided
91 for in Code Section 45-7-21.
- 92 (j) The advisory committee shall stand abolished on December 31, 2029.
- 93 (k) The office shall begin operations no later than January 1, 2027."

94

SECTION 2.

95 (a) This Act shall become effective only if funds are specifically appropriated for the
96 purposes of this Act in an appropriations Act enacted by the General Assembly.

97 (b) If funds are so appropriated, then this Act shall become effective on the date on which
98 such appropriations Act becomes effective.

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SECTION 3.

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