BRIAN MAIENSCHEIN

ASSEMBLYMAN, SEVENTY-SEVENTH DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 236

Temporary Housing Assistance

Background

Homelessness continues to be a problem in our state and throughout the country. While often hidden, homelessness among families with children is at an all-time high. The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program works to alleviate the problem of child homelessness by providing temporary housing assistance to families with children.

Current Law

CalWORKs currently provides temporary housing assistance vouchers for 16 consecutive days during one calendar year to homeless families with children. These vouchers are limited to $65 per night, with a daily maximum (allowing for additional family members) of $125.

Current law inadvertently undermines the success of this benefit and support to homeless families if their temporary housing situation is interrupted for one or more of the 16 consecutive days, regardless of the reason. As a result, homeless families may be refused or lose their temporary housing due to family emergencies, offers of temporary housing from family or friends, or even the pursuit of employment or housing opportunities elsewhere. Further, the $65 per night limit is inadequate to afford sufficient nightly shelter for families. As a result, the program is challenged in achieving its goals of keeping homeless families with children off the street.

This Bill

AB 236 would:

- Remove the consecutive days requirement and allow families to receive 16 total days of temporary housing assistance per year (32 days in cases of documented domestic violence)
- Increase the nightly voucher amount from $65 to $85 for a family of 4 and the daily maximum from $125 to $145
- Clarify that a family that is reunifying following an intervention by child protective services would also be eligible for temporary housing assistance

By making these changes, AB 236 would increase options for our state's poorest families with children while also improving the effectiveness of the CalWORKs program's administration.

Sponsors

Western Center on Law & Poverty
County Welfare Directors Association
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Org.

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