

Fighting Homelessness with Services and Housing Act

S. 923/H.R. 1978

The Fighting Homelessness with Services and Housing Act was introduced in the Senate (S. 923) by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) along with eight other original cosponsors; and in the House (H.R. 1978) by Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA), Rep. Steve Stivers (R-OH), and, to date, 14 other cosponsors.

Overview

According to Senator Feinstein's statement, the Fighting Homelessness with Services and Housing Act (S. 923) would authorize "a new federal funding grant program of \$750 million per year, subject to annual appropriations. Grantees must serve individuals or families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless by providing housing paired with a comprehensive set of services, and they must provide a 25 percent match for any Federal funds received. Because each individual and every community is unique, the grant program created by this bill would be flexible in order to work in any region or for any homeless population."

This bill would authorize the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to provide the grants. HRSA describes itself as "the primary federal agency for improving health care to people who are geographically isolated, economically or medically vulnerable." As a HRSA program, these grants would be ideal for funding health care services and would also work to coordinate housing and services at both the individual and community levels.

HRSA already administers the federal Community Health Center program, including Health Care for the Homeless clinics around the country. These entities work closely with the Medicaid program, which provides health care funding for all eligible low-income people and would need to be a part of any successful effort to address homelessness among people with severe medical issues.

Current Status

Senate and House bills have been introduced and referred to committees: the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), and the House Committee on Financial Services. In addition to the Alliance, a number of other national organizations have endorsed the bill: Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Mayors and CEOs for U.S. Housing Investment, National Association of Counties, National Education Association, National League of Cities, National Low Income Housing Coalition, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, and Treatment Communities of America.

Recommendation

Other Senators and Representatives should co-sponsor the Fighting Homelessness with Services and Housing Act, particularly if they are members of the Senate HELP or House Financial Services Committees, or the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. The bills should move forward in both authorizing committees, taking account of the views of a range of interests to achieve consensus on program design.