

H.791

An act relating to the Housing First Study Committee

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) The “housing first” approach is a system of services for people living with homelessness, which includes emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. The “housing first” approach is premised on the belief that homeless and at-risk people are more responsive to interventions and social services support after they are in their own housing, rather than while living in temporary or transitional housing programs. The “housing first” approach stresses the immediate return to independent living.

(2) Interest in the “housing first” approach has grown recently with the success of the “Utah” model. The “housing first” approach may not be appropriate for every homeless person.

(3) There is a program in Vermont that has developed a rural model and has been considered successful by social and financial measures. The State of Vermont and other states have developed supportive housing programs that may provide similar services for individuals and families whose living conditions are unstable and transitional.

Sec. 2. HOUSING FIRST STUDY COMMITTEE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created a committee to evaluate and investigate the causes and conditions of chronic homelessness, as defined by the federal HEARTH Act of 2009, 42 U.S.C. § 11360, throughout Vermont, and to propose solutions that will provide stable and safe housing that individuals may afford.

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following members:

(1) two members from the House of Representatives, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(2) two members from the Senate, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

(3) a representative of the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition;

(4) a representative of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness;

(5) the Executive Director of the Vermont State Housing Authority or designee;

(6) the Director of Housing for the Agency of Human Services or designee;

(7) a representative from the Vermont Apartment Owners Association;

(8) the Executive Director of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency or designee;

(9) the Commissioner of Mental Health or designee;

(10) the Commissioner of Corrections or designee;

(11) the Executive Director of Pathways Vermont or designee.

(12) the Executive Director of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board or designee; and

(13) a member of the public who has experienced homelessness, who shall be appointed, following the appointment of the Chair of the Committee, by the Chair of the Committee at the first Committee meeting.

(c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall:

(1) evaluate and investigate the causes and conditions of chronic homelessness in Vermont, and propose solutions to providing stable and safe housing that individuals may afford;

(2) evaluate and investigate the experience and results of existing programs that currently address the needs of individuals who are or have been chronically homeless; and

(3) conduct an analysis of supportive housing programs including:

(A) the service costs of one or more service providers;

(B) the costs associated with creating additional housing units dedicated for these models;

(C) the outcomes to be measured to determine whether the clients served will be better off; and

(D) the costs associated with providing rental subsidies.

(d)(1) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Council and the Joint Fiscal Office.

(2) The Joint Fiscal Office, in consultation with the Agency of Human Services and other agencies represented on the Committee, shall prepare an analysis of any projected savings or costs attributed to programs that address chronic homelessness, which shall be presented at the first meeting of the Committee.

(e) Report. On or before December 15, 2014, the Committee shall submit a written report to the General Assembly with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The members representing the House and Senate shall jointly call the first meeting of the Housing First Study Committee to occur on or before August 1, 2014.

(2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at its first meeting.

(3)(A) A majority of the members of the Committee shall be physically present at the same location to constitute a quorum.

(B) A member may vote only if physically present at the meeting location.

(C) Action shall be taken only if there is both a quorum and a majority vote of the members physically present and voting.

(4) The Committee shall meet no more than six times.

(5) The Committee shall cease to exist on December 31, 2014.

(g) Reimbursement.

(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, legislative members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 406 for no more than six meetings.

(2) Other members of the Committee who are not employees of the State of Vermont and who are not otherwise compensated or reimbursed for their attendance shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for no more than six meetings.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2014.