

Joint resolution strongly supporting the eradication of child homelessness

Offered by: Representative Taylor of Barre City

Whereas, being deprived of a permanent place to live is an indignity that far too many Vermont families continue to endure, and

Whereas, the severe early-life impediments homeless children suffer may result in long-term consequences, and

Whereas, with increasing frequency, the homeless include families who have suffered a personal trauma such as job loss or domestic abuse, and

Whereas, many homeless families have one adult working member, but due to financial circumstances are unable to afford permanent housing, and are forced to live in temporary arrangements with family members or friends, or in a shelter facility, and

Whereas, both the financial and human costs of homelessness strain public services, including education and physical and mental health care, and

Whereas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Study found that homeless youths have a higher risk of being in a gang, using heroin, feeling depressed, attempting suicide, and being victims of sexual assault than their peers, and

Whereas, according to the National Center on Family Homelessness, children experiencing homelessness are sick four times more often than their peers; have three times the rate of emotional and behavior problems compared

to their peers; and are four times more likely to show delayed development, and have twice the rate of learning disabilities as their peers, and

Whereas, the National Center on Family Homelessness also found that only 11.4 percent of homeless high school students are proficient in math and 14.6 percent are proficient in reading, and

Whereas, the annual one-day “Point in Time” count of people who are homeless in Vermont, which includes people “couch surfing” or otherwise precariously housed, conducted in January 2013, included 469 families, and

Whereas, the “Emergency Solutions Grants Vermont Annual Report for State Fiscal Year 2013” (the ESG Report) documented unduplicated 4,285 persons sheltered in the 2013 fiscal year, of which 816 were minors, and

Whereas, according to the ESG Report, in fiscal year 2013, the average length of stay in the State’s shelters was 30.7 days, and

Whereas, in Executive Order No. 03-12, Governor Peter Shumlin reestablished the Vermont Council on Homelessness to address comprehensively this serious public policy problem, and

Whereas, the General Assembly believes it is imperative that no child under 16 years of age should be homeless, and will work to eradicate child homelessness in the State of Vermont, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly strongly supports and will work tirelessly to achieve the eradication of child homelessness in Vermont, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly and the Governor should consider the impact of its policies on homeless and precariously housed families in Vermont, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Governor Peter Shumlin, the Vermont Council on Homelessness, the Vermont State Housing Authority, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Secretary of Human Services, and the Commissioner for Children and Families.