

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 128

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 137

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 128—Relative to California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 28, 2014.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 128, Liu. California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month.

This measure would designate the month of November 2014 as California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month and would recognize the need for individuals, schools, communities, businesses, local governments, and the state to take action on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in California.

WHEREAS, Runaway and homeless youth are young people between 12 and 24 years of age who have the least access to essential opportunities and supports; and

WHEREAS, The prevalence of runaways and homelessness among youth is staggering, with studies suggesting that nationally between 1.6 and 1.8 million youth up to 24 years of age experience homelessness every year, of which a disproportionate number are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; and

WHEREAS, Based on national surveys and California's youth population, an estimated 200,000 youth under 18 years of age, and thousands more who are 18 to 24 years of age, are homeless for one or more days each year; and

WHEREAS, The State Department of Education has indicated in a recent report required by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act that during the 2012–13 school year, a total of 259,656 youth, including unaccompanied youth and youth with their families who lack stable housing, in kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, experienced homelessness at least one day out of the year, which is an increase of 18 percent over the previous academic year; and

WHEREAS, An overwhelming majority of runaway and homeless youth have been expelled from their homes by their families; physically, sexually, and emotionally abused at home; discharged from foster care and other state custodial systems without adequate transition plans; or separated from their parents by death or divorce. These youth are often too poor to secure their own basic needs and are ineligible for or unable to access adequate medical or mental health resources; and

WHEREAS, Runaway and homeless youth who live on the street are victims of physical abuse, sexual exploitation, and crime in untold numbers; and

WHEREAS, These youths are on the street because they feel there are no other options open to them; and

WHEREAS, Youths who “age out” of the foster care system are at an increased risk of homelessness, and represent an estimated 20 percent of the 20,000 youth who leave foster care and are currently homeless; and

WHEREAS, Providing safe, stable, and permanent housing for runaway and homeless youth is a family, community, state, and national priority; and

WHEREAS, The future well-being of our state depends on the value we place on our youth, and, in particular, on our actions to provide the most vulnerable young people in the state with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to find and maintain stable housing and develop into healthy and productive adults; and

WHEREAS, The number of effective programs providing services and support to runaway and homeless youth in California is a fraction of what is needed to fully address the needs of these young people, as only 20 of California’s 58 counties have programs for runaway and homeless youth; and

WHEREAS, The California Coalition for Youth has operated the California Youth Crisis Line (1-800-843-5200), 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for over 25 years as the state’s only emergency response system for youth in crisis; and

WHEREAS, November is National Runaway and Homeless Youth Awareness Month; and

WHEREAS, The California Coalition for Youth, along with other community-based organizations, providers, and advocates, is sponsoring the fourth annual California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month to increase awareness and action on behalf of youth who are at risk or currently living on the street; and

WHEREAS, Awareness of the tragedy of youth homelessness and its causes must be heightened to ensure greater support for effective programs aimed at preventing homelessness and helping youth remain off the streets; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes the need for individuals, schools, communities, businesses, local governments, and the state to take action on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature hereby designates the month of November 2014 as California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.