

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 160

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 148

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 160—Relative to California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 26, 2016.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 160, McGuire. California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month.

This measure would designate the month of November 2016 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 12 to 24 years of age, inclusive, 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 2.8 million youth up to 24 years of age experience homelessness every year, of which an overrepresentation, compared to the general youth population, 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, Based on the latest McKinney-Vento report from the State Department of Education, 297,617 youth, including unaccompanied youth and youth with their families who lack stable housing, in kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, experienced homelessness at least one day out of the year during the 2013–14 school year, which is a 10 percent increase over the previous academic year and an 18 percent increase over the 2011–12 academic year; and

WHEREAS, Runaway and homeless youth flee conflict, abuse, neglect, and, increasingly, poverty in their homes. They have become disconnected from educational systems and the workforce and do not have the skills or financial resources to live on their own. The factors impacting youth homelessness are complex and differ from those impacting other homeless populations; and

WHEREAS, Runaway and homeless youth who live on the street are victims of physical abuse, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and crime in untold numbers. Each year an estimated 300,000 youth are either victims, or at risk of becoming victims, of commercial sexual exploitation. Of these victimized children, approximately 60 percent are homeless; and

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

WHEREAS, Of the unaccompanied homeless minors in California, 76.3 percent are unsheltered, which is the second highest percentage in the country. Twenty-eight percent of homeless youth in the country are located in California, and California has the largest number of homeless youth in any state; and

WHEREAS, The number of emergency shelter beds available to homeless youth has dropped from 587 beds in 1990 to, as of the last comprehensive survey in 2010, 555 beds; 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 homeless youth are considered a unique population in the homeless community by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness; 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 27 years as the state’s only emergency response system for youth in crisis and began offering chat-to-text counseling services in 2016; 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 sixth 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 2016 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.