

# STRENGTHEN THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM

## HB3331

REPRESENTATIVE DELIA RAMIREZ • SENATOR LAURA FINE

Each year, Illinois successfully assists thousands of families in avoiding homelessness. The Homelessness Prevention Program is a twenty-year-old program in Illinois. It provides a one-time grant for individuals and families and is estimated to save \$7,548 annually in state costs per household by keeping individuals and families housed and stable.\*

Funds are used for rental and mortgage assistance, security deposits, arrearages, as well as utility assistance. Service providers also offer supportive services directly related to the prevention of homelessness.

Examples of individuals and families who may use the program include:

- ▶ furloughed federal workers
- ▶ people who've experienced an unexpected medical crisis,
- ▶ a grandparent who unexpectedly takes in their grandchildren.

Though the program has proven successful in keeping families stably housed, providers would like to make the program stronger and ensure they are preventing homelessness and not just delaying it.

### IMPEDIMENTS

Current policies restrict providers' ability to ensure that families remain housed after receiving prevention assistance.

- ▶ **Clarify ability to assist people who may need support with arrearages and short-term housing assistance going forward.** Current policy is unclear on how many months of arrearages and/or future assistance a household can receive and whether the two can be combined. There are instances where providers were given consent to provide six months of assistance while others are under the presumption that they can only assist on arrearages or future payments.
- ▶ **Providers are not able to provide comprehensive case management.** Seventy-one percent of provider state that the current funding levels do not meet their case management needs. Providers are currently limited to using 10% of their funding for case management. Along with the housing assistance families may need further help. Without adequate case management funding providers struggle to meet, assess, and assist them with their overall needs. Applicants often need mental health assessments, job training, or child care assistance that would ensure their continued success in staying housed.

### SOLUTION

To better assist individuals and families in need of housing assistance permit providers to use:

- ▶ Discretion to provide up to 6 months of rental and/or mortgage assistance to individuals and families for arrearages and/or future rents.
- ▶ Fifteen percent of their annual funding for case management and administrative costs.

“Under our current systems, for most families we are able to prevent homelessness, for others we are just delaying it, we'd like to better serve those families so that they remain housed.”

– Rachel Contos, Homelessness Prevention Service Provider

\*The impact of homelessness prevention programs on homelessness William N. Evans, James X. Sullivan, Melanie Wallskog Science 12 Aug 2016: Vol. 353, Issue 6300, pp. 694-699 DOI: 10.1126/science.aag0833