

STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

HB5407

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FEDERAL FUNDING MODEL

The United States Department of Education provides the states with financial support to fund services for students experiencing homelessness. These funds allow districts to provide:

- ▶ Basic school supplies;
- ▶ Transportation to and from school and extracurricular activities; and
- ▶ Specialized training and professional development for teachers and other school staffers.

ISSUE

Illinois has a companion funding program mirroring the federal program, that does not provide districts with much flexibility. Illinois school districts identified over 58,000 students experiencing homelessness in the 2022-23 school year. However, almost that many students - an estimated 55,000 more students experiencing homelessness have not been identified.

But with the COVID-19 health emergency, the US Department of Education included American Rescue Plan -- Homeless Children and Youth, or ARP-HCY funds. These are one-time funds that must be obligated by September 2024 and spent by January 2025. They have the potential to create lasting changes in how our nation's public schools and communities respond to student homelessness, while at the same time meeting urgent needs. Unlike the traditional DOE funds, the ARP-HCY funds provided more flexibility.



SOLUTION

With the ARP-HCY funds expiring during the next fiscal year, Illinois can expand its state program to match these allowable uses. The state can better support students with a program that has proven successful, allowing school districts to identify ways that best provide help understanding that homelessness looks different throughout the state and being permitted to implement programs that work best for the community in the best interests of students and families in the district.

USES OF ARP-HCY FUNDS

Some of the uses of ARP-HCY funds include:

- ▶ Providing wrap-around services (which could be provided in collaboration with and/or through contracts with community-based organizations, and could include academic support, trauma-informed care, social-emotional support, and mental health services);
- ▶ Purchasing needed supplies (e.g., personal protective equipment, eyeglasses, school supplies, personal care items);
- ▶ Purchasing technological devices for unaccompanied, homeless children and youth;
- ▶ Providing access to reliable, high-speed internet for students through the purchase of internet-connected devices/equipment, mobile hotspots, wireless service plans, or installation of Community Wi-Fi Hotspots (e.g., at homeless shelters), especially in underserved communities;
- ▶ Paying for short-term, temporary housing (e.g., a few days in a motel) when such emergency housing is the only reasonable option for COVID-safe temporary housing and when necessary to enable the homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities (including summer school); and
- ▶ Providing store cards/prepaid debit cards to purchase materials necessary for students to participate fully in school activities.

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

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