



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

THE ISSUE: AB 824 Transitional Housing for Homeless Youth (Lackey, R-Palmdale) would provide for transitional housing and education services to youth between the ages of 18 and 25. **(Support)**

“We can find no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for lack of housing. There are many unjust situations, but we know God is suffering with us, experiencing them at our side. He does not abandon us.”

—Pope Francis, Visit to Catholic Charities clients at St Patrick’s Church, Washington, DC, Sept. 2015

HISTORY & BACKGROUND

According to the 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, California reported by far the largest number of unaccompanied homeless youth (11,222, or nearly 31% of all homeless youth in the United States), nearly four times as many as New York. About 92 percent of these youth were between the ages of 18 and 24 (10,375), with nearly 900 under the age of 18. Administered by the Office of Emergency Services (OES), the Homeless Youth and Exploitation (HX) Program is a competitive grant program to nonprofits that was established as a pilot project nearly 30 years ago in the following counties: Los Angeles, Santa Clara, San Diego and the city and county of San Francisco.

The 2016 Budget Act appropriated about \$1.1 million to be allocated by OES to the four areas listed above and in a trailer bill, AB 1622, appropriated an additional \$10 million to expand this program into four new counties (Orange, Fresno, San Bernardino and El Dorado) over the next five years. Absent additional coordinated resources to provide access to education and employment assistance, independent living skills development, and family engagement and interventions, homeless youth in California will continue to face chronic adult homelessness.

CHURCH TEACHING

The Church has traditionally viewed housing, not as a commodity, but as a basic human right. This conviction is grounded in our view of the human person and the responsibility of society to protect the life and dignity of every person by providing the conditions where human life and human dignity are not undermined, but enhanced. As Pope John Paul II said in introducing the recent Vatican document, "A house is much more than a roof over one's head." It is "a place where a person creates and lives out his or her life." The right to housing is a consistent theme in our teaching and found in the Church's Charter of the Rights of the Family. "We believe society has the responsibility to protect these rights and the denial of housing to so many constitutes a terrible injustice."

Talking Points

- ▶ Providing services and addressing needs early can help mitigate some of the factors that lead to chronic adult homelessness.
- ▶ This bill would save money on public services in the future.
- ▶ There is still much work to be done as there are still more than 10,000 unaccompanied homeless youth in California.
- ▶ **AB 824** would provide \$15 million for homeless youth transitional living grants for a period of up to 36 months to help stabilize the lives of youth as they transition into adulthood