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SCR-82 California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month. (2015-2016)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 82

CHAPTER 159

Relative to California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 04, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 82, McGuire. California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month.

This measure would proclaim the month of November 2015 as California Runaway and Homeless Youth Month.

Fiscal Committee: no

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 million and 2.8 million youth up to 24 years of age experience homelessness every year, of which an overrepresentation is, compared to the general youth population, 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 California Department of Education, 297,617 youth in California, including unaccompanied youth and youth with their families who lack stable housing, from kindergarten through grade 12 experienced homelessness at least one day out of the year during the 2013–2014 school year, a 10 percent increase over the previous academic year, and an 18 percent increase over the previous two years; and

WHEREAS, Runaway and homeless youth flee conflict, abuse, neglect, or, increasingly, poverty in their homes. They have become disconnected from educational systems and the workforce, and do not have the skills and 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, and crime in untold numbers. An estimated 300,000 youth are either victims, or at risk of becoming victims, of the commercial sexual exploitation of children each year, of which 60 percent of these victimized children are homeless; and

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

WHEREAS, The percentage of unaccompanied homeless minors who are unsheltered in California stands at 79.2 percent, which is the second highest in the country; and

WHEREAS, The number of emergency shelter beds available to homeless youth has dropped from 587 beds in 1990 to 555 beds in 2010, as of the last comprehensive survey; 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 out 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

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 California's fifth annual Runaway and Homeless Youth Month to increase awareness and action on behalf of youth 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 2015 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.