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SCR-75 California Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month. (2019-2020)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 75

CHAPTER 160

Relative to California Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 19, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 75, Hurtado. California Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month.

This measure would proclaim the month of November 2019 as California Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month to 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.

Fiscal Committee: no

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 runaway and homeless youth is staggering, with studies suggesting that, nationally, between 1,600,000 and 2,800,000 youth up to 24 years of age, inclusive, experience homelessness every year, of which youth of color and LGBTQ youth are overrepresented compared to the general youth population; 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, inclusive, are homeless for one or more days each year; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2018 Point-in-Time Count shows the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in California is 12,396, and there are another 2,297 parenting youth and their children experiencing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, A study released in November 2017 by the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall found that 1 in 10 young adults 18 to 25 years of age, inclusive, and at least 1 in 30 adolescents 13 to 17 years of age, inclusive, experiences homelessness over the course of a year; and

WHEREAS, In California, 80 percent of unaccompanied homeless youth are unsheltered, which is the second highest percentage in the country. Fifty-four percent of unsheltered and unaccompanied homeless youth in the country are located in California, and California has the largest number of homeless youth in any state; 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 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, 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, Homeless youth tend to start using drugs at a younger age, often before 15 years of age. Early drug use and abuse is predictive of serious adult addiction problems and long-term homelessness; and

WHEREAS, Youth 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, Many of these youth are on the street because they feel there are no other options open to them; 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 22 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 30 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 ninth annual California Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention 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 2019 as California Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.