
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular

Bill No: SB 513 **Hearing Date:** 1/5/2022
Author: Hertzberg
Version: 1/3/2022 Amended
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Alison Hughes

SUBJECT: Homeless shelters grants: pets and veterinary services.

DIGEST: This bill requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to establish a grant program to provide funding to homeless shelters to provide shelter, food, and basic veterinary services for pets owned by individuals experiencing homelessness, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Defines “Housing First” to mean the evidence-based model that uses housing as a tool, rather than a reward, for recovery and centers on providing or connecting homeless people to permanent housing as quickly as possible. Housing First providers offer services as needed and requested on a voluntary basis and that do not make housing contingent on participation in services. It includes time-limited rental or services assistance, so long as the housing and service provider assists the recipient in accessing permanent housing and in securing longer-term rental assistance, income assistance, or employment.
- 2) Defines a “Low Barrier Navigation Center” as a Housing First, low-barrier, service-enriched shelter focused on moving people into permanent housing and provides temporary living facilities while case managers connect individuals experiencing homelessness to income, public benefits, health services, shelter, and housing. “Low Barrier” means best practices to reduce barriers to entry, and may include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a) The presence of partners if it is not a population-specific site, such as for survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault, women, or youth;
 - b) Pets;

- c) The storage of possessions; and
 - d) Privacy, such as partitions around beds in a dormitory setting or in larger rooms containing more than two beds, or private rooms.
- 3) Establishes the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) within the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency, with the purpose of coordinating the state's response to homelessness by utilizing Housing First practices.
 - 4) Establishes the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) under the HCFC to provide one-time grant funds to address the immediate homelessness challenges of local cities and counties.
 - 5) Establishes the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention Program (HHAPP), also under the HCFC, to build on HEAP and provide funds to help local jurisdictions combat homelessness.
 - 6) Establishes the California Emergency Solutions and Housing Program under HCD to fund a variety of activities to help individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

This bill:

- 1) Requires HCD to establish a grant program to provide qualified homeless shelters with shelter, food, and basic veterinary services for pets owned by individuals experiencing homelessness.
- 2) Defines "qualified homeless shelter" as a shelter that meets all of the following conditions:
 - a) It has rules of conduct and responsibility regarding pets and their owners;
 - b) It provides crates or kenneling either near bunks or in a separate area;
 - c) It provides food for both people experiencing homelessness, and their pets; and
 - d) It offers veterinarian services, including spay and neutering services.
- 3) Provides that this program shall be only be implemented if funding is provided in the Budget Act.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Author's statement.* According to the author, “[t]he impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals experiencing homelessness is creating a ‘crisis within a crisis’ for our states most vulnerable communities. On any given night in California, at least 150,000 people are without a home. Many of these individuals refuse housing and services if doing so requires them to abandon their most treasured belonging – their pet. This happens all too often as a majority of shelters, motels, and other assisted housing programs do not permit animals on their property, pushing potential beneficiaries to live on the street. SB 513 offers a common-sense solution by building on the success of the Pet Assistance and Support (PAS) Program[,] which awards grants to shelters serving the needs of both individuals experiencing homelessness and their animal companions. Originally established in 2019, the PAS Program was recently extended through an allocation of \$10 million of funding in the 2021 Budget. By requiring HCD to provide further support for the PAS Program, we provide for individuals who otherwise would not receive essential services such as medical and living assistance, which are all the more important in the midst of this deadly pandemic.”
- 2) *Homelessness in California.* Based on the 2020 point-in-time count, California has the largest homeless population in the nation with 161,548 people experiencing homelessness on any given night. Over two-thirds of those people, 113,660, are unsheltered, meaning they are living outdoors and not in temporary shelters. Nearly half of all unsheltered people in the country are in California. The homelessness crisis is driven largely by the lack of affordable rental housing for lower-income people. In the current market, 2.2 million extremely low-income and very low-income renter households are competing for 664,000 affordable rental units. Of the six million renter households in the state, 1.7 million are paying more than 50% of their income toward rent. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that the state needs an additional 1.5 million housing units affordable to very-low income Californians.
- 3) *Pet friendly shelters.* The nonprofit Pets of the Homeless estimates that 5-10% of Americans experiencing homelessness have dogs or cats, yet few shelters allow individuals to keep pets that do not qualify as service animals with them. This means many unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness must choose between seeking shelter and keeping their pets. The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty suggests that policy changes that make accommodations for pets help bring programs into better accordance with Housing First; reducing this barrier can encourage people to come indoors and provide access to further services. Despite changing attitudes, however, many

shelters still do not accommodate pets. The *Orange County Register* found that in 2018, only three shelters in Orange County had pet friendly policies.

- 4) *Low-barrier housing policies.* Evidence shows that people experiencing homelessness are more likely to accept temporary or interim housing if the housing is low-barrier. Typically, low-barrier housing allows for pets, allows individuals to keep their possessions, and provides non-congregate settings, with privacy for families and partners. Over the last few years, state programs and policies have encouraged low-barrier shelters and navigation centers. The HHAPP provides funding to large cities, counties, and continuums of care to fund, among other things, low-barrier navigation centers. In addition, AB 101 (Chapter 159, Statutes of 2019) created a streamlined, by-right approval process for low-barrier navigation centers that allow for pets, possession, and privacy.
- 5) *Pet Assistance and Support Program (PAS).* In 2019, the state budget included a \$5 million appropriation to HCD to fund shelter, food, and basic veterinarian services, for the pets of people living in homeless shelters, and as a result, HCD established the Pet Assistance and Support Program (PAS). PAS provides grants to cities, counties, and nonprofit corporations with a primary mission to shelter individuals experiencing homelessness and meet the definition of “qualified shelter” (*i.e.*, the shelter has rules of conduct and responsibility, provides crates or kenneling, provides food to both homeless individuals and their and pets, and offers veterinarian services).

HCD issued a notice of funding availability (NOFA) for PAS in December 2019. HCD received 49 applications, totaling \$9 million. All funding was awarded to 28 shelters in April 2020; grants were set at \$100,000 to \$200,000, depending on the applicant’s operating budget and funding gap. All grant funds must be spent by December 30, 2022. This bill effectively makes PAS a permanent program. The 2021-22 budget included an additional \$10 million for the PAS program.

- 6) *Third time’s the charm?* There have been two prior attempts to create a permanent program in statute: SB 258 (Hertzberg, 2019) and SB 344 (Hertzberg, 2021). Both bills were held on the Assembly Appropriations Suspense File.
- 7) *Show me the money.* The author will be seeking additional funding for the homeless pets program in this upcoming budget cycle.

RELATED LEGISLATION:

SB 344 (Hertzberg, 2021) — would have required the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to establish a grant program to provide funding to homeless shelters to provide shelter, food, and basic veterinary services for pets owned by individuals experiencing homelessness, as specified. *This bill was held on the Assembly Appropriations Suspense File.*

SB 258 (Hertzberg, 2019) — would have required HCD, within the California Emergency Solutions and Housing Program, to develop and administer a program to award grants to qualified homeless shelters for the provision of shelter, food, and basic veterinary service for pets owned by people experiencing homelessness. *This bill was held on the Assembly Appropriations Suspense File.*

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, December 22, 2021.)

SUPPORT:

American Society for The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
Hope of The Valley Rescue Mission
People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)
Social Compassion in Legislation
WEAVE

OPPOSITION:

None received.

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