

Policies Impacting LGBTQIA+ Homeless Youth

The purpose of this panel is to open the discussion surrounding LGBTQIA+ youth homelessness. LGBTQIA+ youth are disproportionately unhoused, thus making them more susceptible to negative health outcomes later in life. The following is a list of policies with potential to positively impact this community. However, it is important to note that none specifically identifies this population. Although LGBTQIA+ youth are far more likely to experience homelessness, they often fall between the cracks in terms of policy. It is absolutely vital to create policies which support this community and focus on eliminating the disparities which they experience.

HB692 - Child Care Act- Host Homes*

Effective July 1, 2022, this bill will utilize CCBYS (Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services) strategy to improve the host-home experience and to redirect away from child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This aids LGBTQIA+ youth through avoiding retraumatization.

HB2914 - DCFS Racial Disparities Report*

Put into effect in August 2021, this bill focuses on dismantling racial inequities in government housing programs. There are higher proportions of nonwhite LGBTQIA+ youth in the homeless community, meaning that this bill has incredibly high outreach potential. It requires multiple de-aggregated for race measurements to be done by a public university so as to shed light on racial disparities in housing and education.

HB577 - School Code Prevent Youth Suicide

Effective July 1, 2022, this bill calls for a comprehensive suicide prevention policy. It directly identifies LGBTQIA+ youth and students experiencing homelessness as being extremely high-risk, and champions a model which better serves these demographics. This bill exemplifies trauma-informed care by leading with prevention and education to avoid retraumatization in their policy.

HJR1 - Teen Mental Health Support

This bill, which has been adopted by both houses, advocates for students to have the ability to identify mental illnesses independently. It also specifically calls out the disproportionate rate of mental illness experienced by LGBTQIA+ identifying youth. Empowering youth to be able to self-identify mental illness reduces a major risk factor for homelessness, particularly among LGBTQIA+ youth.

HB2983 - Youth Homelessness Prevention Subcommittee Act

This act calls for a cohesive strategy across welfare, corrections, human services and mental health to reduce chronic homelessness, particularly for those disproportionately affected by it. The bill establishes subcommittees with several yearly meetings to create data-based plans for reducing youth homelessness.

SB2661 - National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020

This federal public law designates 9-8-8 as the national phone number for suicide prevention and mental health crises, making this hotline more accessible than the previous 10-digit number. The bill also calls for the development of specific specialized services for high-risk populations, the LGBTQIA+ community being one of them.

