



The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act of 2019 (H.R. 5191)

Background

More than 4 million teens and young adults experience homelessness each year, often as a result of family instability, parental rejection, or financial hardship. For many of these young people, homelessness will shape the trajectory of their lives. Youth homelessness is associated with much lower high school graduation rates and much higher rates of adult homelessness. Homeless children and youth, especially those living in the street, are also at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Young people cannot overcome the obstacles of homelessness on their own. Since 1974, Congress has provided funding for shelters as well as a broad range of services to protect and support homeless youth. Yet these services reach just a small fraction of the millions of the teens and young adults who are searching for permanent homes each year. Federal, state, and local policymakers can do more to intervene in the critical stages of a young person's life to prevent them from facing a lifetime of homelessness and empowering them to reach their full potential.

About the *Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act of 2019*

The *Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act of 2019* (RHYTPA) is a bipartisan bill that will help states combat youth homelessness by **expanding and enhancing the quality of services** provided to young people. The bill reauthorizes and makes improvements to federal programs to combat youth homelessness by putting a greater focus on the provision of **trauma-informed** services that are **appropriate for the diverse community of youth** who experience homelessness each year.

- RHYTPA authorizes \$225 million for basic services and the transitional living program to assist homeless youth in getting on the **path to finding a permanent home**. In some cases, this support will go towards strengthening their relationships with their families so that they are able to return home. In other cases, it will help homeless youth learn basic life skills so that they are able to transition into independent, self-sustaining adults.
- RHYTPA also authorizes another \$75 million for services that reach vulnerable homeless youth living in the streets, including funds to **strengthen the identification of and support for young people who have experienced sexual trafficking or trafficking in persons**.

The *Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act of 2019* will also help address youth homelessness by improving the quality of federal data. Specifically, the bill will require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct regular estimates of the incidence and prevalence of youth homelessness and will enhance the quality and robustness of the data that local programs collect.

Additionally, the bill:

- Prohibits discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.
- Expands the maximum length of stay at Basic Center Program shelters from 21 to 30 days.
- Requires local programs to assist youth in verifying their status as homeless youth when completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Provides suicide prevention and counseling services to homelessness youth.