

Services for Ending Long-Term Homelessness Act (SELHA)

H.R. 1471/S. 709

Current Situation

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funding to build and maintain permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals and families.

Once chronically homeless people are in permanent supportive housing, success is only achieved by providing them with supportive services that will help them stay off of the streets and out of hospitals and jails, and to achieve the stability they need to lead healthier lives as productive members of the community.

This approach is very cost effective. Research on public expenditures in New York City found that each unit of supportive housing saved over \$16,000 in emergency, public health, and shelter resources per year, almost entirely offsetting the cost of the supportive housing itself. Similar results have been discovered in cities around the country.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) operates several grant programs for homeless individuals but none of them are specifically focused on chronic homelessness or on delivering services such as case management, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and health education, coordinated with permanent housing.

SELHA

- Establishes a grant program run by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for services to end chronic homelessness.
- ‘Chronically homeless’ is defined as a individual or family who is currently homeless, has been homeless continuously for at least one year or has been homeless on at least four separate occasions in the last three years, and has a head of household with a disabling condition.
- States, cities, public, or nonprofit entities can apply for the grants.
- Consideration will be provided for geographic diversity, including urban and rural areas.
- Priority will be given to applicants that target funds to people that are homeless for longer than one year, frequently use the ER, or interact regularly with law enforcement.
- Services provided by the grant awardees may include mental health services, substance abuse treatment, referrals for primary health care and dental services, health education, money management, and parental skills training.
- Initial grant awardees must provide \$1 for every \$3 of federal money.
- Renewal grant awardees must provide \$1 for every \$1 of federal money.
- 20% of the grant awardees’ matching funds can be from other federal “mainstream” programs such as the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant. This provision will encourage collaboration with existing programs and access for homeless people to existing mainstream health and human services systems, while assisting the grant awardees in achieving their match.
- The initial grants will run from 3-5 years and the renewal grants will run for up to 5 years.