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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT & VETERANS AFFAIRS  
ANALYSIS**

**BILL #:** CS/HB 427  
**RELATING TO:** Homelessness  
**SPONSOR(S):** Committee on Local Government & Veterans Affairs, Representative Fiorentino & others  
**TIED BILL(S):** None

**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COUNCIL(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:**

- (1) LOCAL GOVERNMENT & VETERANS AFFAIRS (SGC) YEAS 9 NAYS 0
- (2) EDUCATION INNOVATION (LLC)
- (3) COUNCIL FOR SMARTER GOVERNMENT
- (4)
- (5)

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I. SUMMARY:

This bill incorporates the recommendations of the Commission on the Homeless, establishing the State Office on Homelessness within the Department of Children and Family Services and creating the Council on Homelessness to develop policy and advise the State Office on Homelessness. This bill redefines the terms "homeless" and "homeless child"; amends public school admissions requirements for homeless children; provides a temporary exemption from required immunizations, proof-of-age requirements and school-entry health examination requirements. The bill amends reporting requirements for the Florida Housing Finance Corporation; creates "Challenge Grants" and "Homeless Housing Assistance Grants;" amends provisions relating to local homeless coalitions; encourages the adoption of local homeless continuums of care; encourages facilities providing mental illness or substance abuse services to ensure that persons leaving their care are not discharged into homelessness; requires OPPAGA to study the impacts of homelessness, with a report due in 2005; designates December 21 as the Homeless Persons' Memorial Day; and appropriates funds for homeless services and housing for the homeless.

This bill appears to have a fiscal impact on the Department of Children and Families.

SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- |                                   |   |  |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u>         | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u>             | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input type="checkbox"/>            | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u>      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input type="checkbox"/>            | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input type="checkbox"/>            | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u>      | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/>            | N/A <input type="checkbox"/>            |

1. The bill creates the State Office of Homelessness within the Department of Children and Families and creates the Council on Homelessness (Council). Please see the "Section-by-Section Analysis" in Section 1.

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

*Florida's Homeless Population*

Homelessness is one of the nation's most visible social problems, generating widespread calls for governmental intervention. State and federal government appropriate millions of dollars for the homeless. At the local level, units of government, agencies, organizations, churches and charities remain the main provider of services to the homeless. In Florida, there are at least 57,400 homeless people on any given day, up 9 percent from FY 1997-98. Women account for 21% and children comprise 29% of the state's total homeless population. Homeless veterans make up approximately 16% of the total. This is a critical problem for the State of Florida.

The major causes of homelessness in Florida include poverty, a shortage of affordable housing, unemployment and poor wages, mental illness, alcoholism, drug abuse, family disintegration, and lack of education and training. Additional causes of homelessness identified by the 20 local homeless coalitions include the institutional release of people from prisons and institutions without employment, housing, or a viable means of self-support; school failure and lack of education; impediments to employment such as lack of affordable child care, after school programs and transportation; life skill deficiencies; emergency situations such as eviction and illness; and migration and immigration of people to Florida without means of self-support.\*

Being homeless is defined in section 420.621(4)(a)(b), Florida Statutes (F.S.), as:

"having a nighttime residence in a public or private emergency shelter; such as, an armory, school, church, government building or, where a temporary voucher is provided by a public or private agency, in a hotel, apartment, or boarding home or on the streets or under a bridge or aqueduct, in a park, subway, bus terminal, railroad station, airport, abandoned building, or vehicle, or in any other public or private space that is not designed for shelter."

\*The Department of Children & Families is required by section 420.623(4), F.S., to prepare an Annual Report on Homeless Conditions in Florida to the Governor and Legislature. The statistics were taken from the most recent annual report that covers FY 1998-99.

### *Federal and State Programs for the Homeless*

In 1987, Congress enacted the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The original act consisted of 14 programs providing a range of services to homeless people, including outreach, prevention, emergency shelter, transitional and supported housing, job training, health care, alcohol, drug abuse and mental treatment, education, veterans' reintegration, and permanent housing. Most of the money funding these programs are distributed directly to service providers in the community. The Florida Department of Children and Families estimates that federal spending for Florida's homeless has been approximately \$400 million since 1987.

In Florida, many financial and social services for the homeless are provided through 25 local coalitions for the homeless created by the Department of Children and Family Services (section 420.623, F.S.). The major functions of the local homeless coalitions are:

- planning and coordinating homeless services;
- promoting public awareness about the needs of the homeless;
- providing information and referral to help homeless people obtain the services they require;
- gathering and reporting data on homeless conditions in Florida; and
- seeking federal, state and local resources to assist the homeless (\$31 million in FY 1998-99).

In fiscal year 2000-01, the Legislature appropriated \$189,000 to provide administrative support to 20 of the 25 homeless coalitions in the state.

Local coalitions prepare local plans of action that identify and rank local needs related to problems of homelessness, and include a spending plan. Local homeless coalitions can apply for state funding through a competitive grants-in-aid program administered by the department through its districts (section 420.625, F.S.). In FY 2000-01, \$798,422 was allocated for these grants. Organizations contracting to provide services through financial assistance provided through the grant program must provide a minimum of 25 percent of the funding necessary for the support of project operations.

The focus of many of the community-based homeless programs is on the delivery of shelter and other emergency services. According to the local homeless coalitions, there are 177 homeless shelters in Florida with a total bed capacity of 7,148. These facilities meet only 12% of the shelter needs of Florida's 57,400 homeless. It is estimated that there are now 299 transitional and supported housing facilities for the homeless with 10,576 beds. Eighteen of the homeless coalitions provide a continuum of care for the homeless that involves the coordination between multiple community agencies to provide outreach services, emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing and other support services.

Several other state initiatives benefit the homeless:

- In FY 2000-01, the state was awarded \$2,264,000 through the Federal Emergency Shelter Grant program to fund community projects and services.
- The Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program, authorized by section 414.16, F.S., was allocated \$1.8 million in FY 2000-01 to help homeless families and those at immediate risk of homelessness due to natural and household disasters, loss of wages, and other conditions that cause an imminent loss of housing. Up to four thousand families each year are served by this program.
- The Department of Children and Family Services, through the Florida Coalition for the Homeless, implemented the Temporary Housing Assistance for Homeless Families program to provide short-term financial assistance to homeless families. Up to \$2000 per family has been

available for services to sustain housing and employment. This program was funded from a one-time TANF grant of \$5 million.

- The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services funds and operates a statewide network of 29 homeless and runaway youth shelters.
- Additional programs that benefit the homeless include the State Domestic Abuse Program and the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program operated by Florida A&M University.

#### *Local Option Food and Beverage Tax*

Section 212.0306, F.S., authorizes Miami-Dade County to levy up to 1% local option food and beverage tax, by ordinance, to fund services for the homeless. In addition, 15% of the tax proceeds must be used to fund the construction and operation of domestic violence centers. The tax is levied on the sale of food, beverages and alcoholic beverages in establishments licensed by the state to sell alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises, except hotels and motels. Exemptions from the tax include restaurants with less than \$400,000 per year in gross revenues, veterans' organizations, and all transactions that are exempt from the state sales tax.

Eighty-five percent of the tax proceeds must be used to assist persons who are or are about to become homeless. Authorized uses include providing emergency homeless shelters, food, clothing, medical care, counseling, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, mental health treatment, employment and training, education, and housing. Tax proceeds may also be used as collateral or pledged for construction projects.

As a condition of levying the tax, the county had to develop a task force to prepare a plan, subject to the county commission's approval, to address the needs of the homeless.

#### *The Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC)*

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation is the primary state agency responsible for building affordable housing in Florida. The State Housing Initiatives Partnerships (SHIP) program and the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program are two FHFC programs that provide housing for low-income persons.

The SHIP program (section 420.9072, F.S.) was created to provide funds to counties and cities as an incentive to create local housing partnerships and to preserve and expand production of affordable housing. Funds are distributed to counties and eligible municipalities on an entitlement basis. SHIP funds, estimated at \$162.4 million for fiscal year 2001-02, are allocated by population, with each county receiving at least \$350,000. SHIP funds emergency repairs, new construction, rehabilitation, down payment and closing cost assistance, impact fees, construction and gap financing, mortgage buy-downs, acquisition of property for affordable housing, matching funds for federal housing grants and programs, and home ownership counseling.

At least 65 percent of each local government's SHIP funds must be used for home ownership and 75 percent must be used for construction, rehabilitation, or emergency repairs. At least 30 percent of funds must be reserved for awards to benefit very-low-income households or eligible sponsors that will serve very-low-income households. Another 30 percent of funds must be awarded to low-income households. Up to 10 percent of funds may be used for administrative costs. In FY 1997-98, local governments reported that SHIP funds were used to construct 286 units for homeless persons, 257 of which were in Duval County.

The SAIL program (section 420.5087(3), F.S.) is designed to stimulate production of affordable, multi-family rental housing for very-low income individuals and families. SAIL leverages state loan funds, local government contributions, developer equity and private bond financing. Section

420.5087(3), F.S., requires at least 10% of SAIL funds be reserved for each of three tenant groups: commercial fishing workers and farm-workers; families; and elderly persons. It is estimated that \$36.4 million will be available in FY 2000-01 for distribution.

#### *The Affordable Housing Study Commission*

Section 420.609, F.S., established the Affordable Housing Study Commission to analyze solutions and programs that address the state's acute need for housing for very-low-income, low-income, and moderate-income persons and elderly persons. The commission is charged to review, evaluate, and make recommendations regarding existing and proposed housing programs and initiatives. The commission must annually submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a report detailing its findings and making specific program, legislative, and funding recommendations and any other recommendations it deems appropriate.

#### *Commission on the Homeless*

Chapter 2000-238, Laws of Florida, created the Commission on the Homeless to review the problems of the homeless in this state and propose solutions for reducing homelessness and improving the provision of social services to the homeless. The commission held five public meetings throughout the state, taking testimony on a wide range of topics related to homelessness. The commission held additional meetings to deliberate their findings and report to the Governor and Legislature. The report was issued on January 1, 2000, and contained specific recommendations and proposed legislation to address the problems of homelessness.

#### *School Registration Requirements*

Section 232.032, F.S., mandates that school districts require a certification of immunization as a condition of initial entrance into a public or nonpublic school. However, the school board may establish a policy that permits a student up to 30 school days to present such certification. Section 232.03, F.S., requires that proof of age be provided as a condition of enrolling in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Section 232.0315, F.S., mandates that school districts require a school-entry health examination as a condition of initial entrance into a public or nonpublic school. However, the school board may establish a policy that permits a student up to 30 school days to present such certification.

Rule 6D-3.011, F.A.C., (Control of communicable diseases, public and nonpublic schools, grades preschool, and kindergarten through 12; forms and guidelines) provides clarification and guidelines related to the required immunizations for school attendance.

Rule 6A-6.024, F.A.C., (School Entry Health Examination) addresses the implementation of the school entry health examination. It identifies the licensure of health professionals who are authorized to perform and certify the general health examination required for school entry. It also includes information about the Department of Health form to be used to document the health examination and addresses the transfer of all student health records pursuant to requirements.

#### *Workforce Florida*

The "Workforce Innovation Act of 2000," chapter 445, F.S., established Workforce Florida, Inc. as the principal workforce policy organization for the state. Workforce Florida is charged to design and implement strategies that help Floridians enter, remain in, and advance in the workplace. Regional workforce boards are charged with implementing one-stop delivery systems for a variety of work search, training, and support services.

C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This Committee Substitute (CS) includes the substance of HB 427, some modifications to the bill as filed, and additional provisions to address the problem of homelessness in Florida.

The CS provides whereas clauses to describe the plight of homeless persons, the economic impact of homelessness on the state, the conclusions of the Florida Homeless Study Commission, and the need for coordinated action by the state and communities. This bill creates a section of law to establish the State Office on Homelessness within the Department of Children and Family Services. The executive director of the office is to be appointed by the Governor. The Council on Homelessness is created to develop policy and advise the State Office on Homelessness.

D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

**Section 1.** Subsection (35) of section 228.041, F.S., relating to definitions, is amended to redefine "homeless child" for use in the Florida School Code. The definition is expanded to include provisions from the definition of homeless person in federal law. In addition, it includes children who reside in a household in which no parent or guardian of the child is a member because of the inability of all parents or guardians to supply adequate housing for the child. A child in the custody of the state will not be considered homeless.

**Section 2.** Subsection (7) of section 232.03, F.S., relating to evidence of date of birth, is created to require school districts to grant homeless children a temporary exemption for 30 school days.

**Section 3.** Subsection (1) of section 232.0315, F.S., relating to school-entry health examinations, is amended to require school districts, barring extenuating circumstances, to grant homeless children a temporary exemption for 30 school days.

**Section 4.** Paragraph (e) of subsection (3) of section 232.032, F.S., relating to immunization against communicable diseases, is amended to require school districts, barring extenuating circumstances, to grant homeless children a temporary exemption for 30 school days. The public school health nurse or authorized nonpublic school official is responsible for follow-up of each such child until proper certification is obtained.

**Section 5.** Subsection (3) of section 420.5087, F.S., relating to the State Apartment Incentive Loan Program, is amended to include persons who are homeless in the tenant groups for which not less than 5% of State Apartment Incentive Loan Program (SAIL) funds are reserved. As a result, it is estimated that at least 1.7 million could be available annually for homeless housing.

**Section 6.** Paragraph (e) of subsection (3) of section 420.511, F.S., is amended to require the annual report of Florida Housing Finance Corporation to list the number of homeless persons served under each housing program administered by the corporation.

**Section 7.** Section 420.609, F.S., relating to the Affordable Housing Study Commission, is amended to add two citizens, both appointed by the Governor, one to represent the local housing authority and one to represent the housing interests of persons that are homeless, to the Commission. This section requires the Affordable Housing Study Commission to analyze solutions and programs to address the state's need for housing for the homeless.

**Section 8.** Subsection (4) of section 420.621, F.S., relating to definitions, is amended to revise the definition of homeless, consistent with the definition in federal law. It is expanded to include: those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and those living in an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized. This provision also

clarifies that it does not include any person imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to state or an Act of Congress.

**Section 9.** Section 420.622, F.S., is created, relating to State Office on Homelessness; Council on Homelessness, creates the State Office on Homelessness within the Department of Children and Family Services to provide interagency, council, and other related coordination on issues relating to homelessness. The executive director of the office is to be appointed by the Governor. This section also creates the Council on Homelessness to develop policy and advise the State Office on Homelessness. The council consists of fifteen members from public and private agencies. The council members receive no compensation and are reimbursed for travel expenses only. The council will meet at least four times per year. The council is required to:

- Coordinate among state, local, and private agencies a statewide consolidated program and financial plan for homeless services, incorporating regionally developed programs and plans;
- Collect and maintain a database of information pertaining to the homeless;
- Annually evaluate state and local services and resources;
- Provide information on funding sources for services for the homeless, and provide technical assistance to obtain these funds;
- Monitor and provide recommendations for coordination of the activities and programs of local coalitions for the homeless; promote the effectiveness of programs that address the needs of persons who are homeless;
- Establish, maintain, expand and provide technical assistance to local homeless assistance continuums of care;
- Develop and assist in the coordination of policies relating to the discharge or transfer of persons from state supported or regulated facilities who are homeless or at risk for homelessness;
- Spearhead outreach efforts for maximizing access by people who are homeless or at risk for homelessness to state and federal programs and resources;
- Promote a federal policy agenda to assist the state's homeless;
- Develop and promote outcome and accountability measures for homeless programs;
- Formulate policies and legislative proposals and coordinate the implementation of state and federal policies;
- Convene meetings and workshops to address homeless issues;
- Conduct or promote research on homeless programs;
- Advocate for homeless issues; and
- Collaborate and coordinate programs for the homeless with faith-based organizations.

This section also authorizes the State Office on Homelessness, with the concurrence of the Council on Homelessness, to distribute "Challenge Grants" of up to \$500,000 annually to agencies providing homeless assistance continuums of care. To qualify, agencies must develop and implement a local homeless assistance continuum of care plan, as outlined in section 11 of the committee substitute. Preference is to be given to agencies that have demonstrated the ability to provide quality services and leverage federal and private funding, and to agencies in catchment areas with the greatest need for housing and services to the homeless.

This section also authorizes the State Office on Homelessness, with the concurrence of the Council on Homelessness, to distribute "Homeless Housing Assistance Grants" of up to \$750,000 annually to agencies to construct or rehabilitate transitional or permanent housing units for homeless persons. Preference for the grants must be given to applicants who leverage additional public and private funds, who build or rehabilitate the greatest number of units, and who build or rehabilitate in catchment areas with the greatest need for housing for the homeless, relative to the population of the catchment area. However, no project may be funded that has not been approved by the local coalition for the homeless for the area served.

The council is directed to annually issue an evaluation of the executive director's performance and a report summarizing the "council's recommendations to the office and corresponding actions taken by the office, and any recommendations to the Legislature for proposals to reduce homelessness in this state."

**Section 10.** Section 420.623, F.S., is amended to revise the provisions relating to local coalitions' activities for the homeless. The list of organizations required to be given the opportunity to participate in the coalitions is increased to include substance abuse treatment agencies, community health centers, local school districts, agencies serving specific subgroups of the homeless population, local community-based care alliances, and interested business groups and associations.

The functions of the coalitions are expanded to include the development, or assisting with the development, of a local homeless assistance continuum of care plan for the area served by the coalition. In addition, the coalition is designated as the lead agency, with some exceptions, for the continuum of care. The requirement for a local plan of action by the coalition is deleted. The local homeless assistance continuum of care plan functionally replaces the local plan of action. However, coalitions will still be required to submit an annual report detailing the coalition's goals and activities. The coalitions are also charged with developing a strategy for increasing support and participation from local businesses in the coalition's programs and activities.

The information required in the Department of Children and Family Services annual report on the homeless is expanded to include describing the progress made in the development and implementation of local homeless assistance continuums of care plans in each district.

**Section 11.** Section 420.624, F.S., is created to encourage communities, to adopt a local homeless assistance continuum of care -- an integrated, comprehensive service delivery system to the homeless and persons at risk for homelessness. Those adopting a continuum of care are encouraged to develop and annually update a plan for the continuum of care, designating a lead agency to implement the plan. The Office on Homelessness is required to designate non-overlapping continuum of care catchment areas throughout the state and to recognize only one continuum of care plan for each area. This section provides specific components of a continuum of care, with the requirement that these components be coordinated and integrated, when possible, with other mainstream service delivery systems currently available.

**Section 12.** Section 420.626, F.S., is created to encourage facilities providing mental illness or substance abuse services to ensure that persons leaving their care or custody are not discharged into homelessness. Hospitals and inpatient medical facilities, crisis stabilization units, residential treatment facilities, assisted living facilities, and detoxification centers are encouraged to develop and implement procedures to:

- screen those at risk for homelessness;
- develop a discharge plan to address how such persons will secure housing and other needed care and support;
- assess the abilities of support service providers and select the best options for persons discharged from their care;
- coordinate efforts and information sharing with care and support organizations; and
- provide sufficient medication, medical equipment and supplies, clothing, transportation and other necessities.

This section is intended only to recommend model guidelines and procedures that facilities or institutions may consider when discharging persons into the community.



**Section 13.** Subsection 2 of section 420.9075, F.S., is amended to encourage SHIP recipients to partner with representatives of the homeless, elderly, and farm workers in the development of local housing programs.

**Section 14.** Section 445.009, F.S., is amended to require regional workforce boards to consider including homeless service providers as partners in the local One-Stop Delivery system.

**Section 15.** Requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to study the economic impact of homelessness on state and local agencies in Florida. The report must recommend changes to state agency practices which simultaneously save taxpayer dollars and improve the quality of life for homeless persons in this state; review practices of local governments providing services to homeless persons; and recommend strategies to better coordinate service delivery with state and local agencies. The report must also recommend strategies to access federal funds for services to the homeless. The report must be submitted by January 1, 2005, to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

**Section 16.** Designates December 21, the first day of winter and the longest night of the year, as a Homeless Persons' Memorial Day to bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness. The Office on Homelessness, local homeless coalitions, and local governments are encouraged to sponsor events to promote awareness of the plight of the homeless and identify actions that individuals and organizations can take to address the problem of homelessness.

**Section 17.** Appropriates \$3.0 million to the State Office on Homelessness, Department of Children and Family Services from the General Revenue Fund for fiscal year 2001-2002 to fund "Challenge Grants" created in section 9 of this bill, and to fund administrative costs of the State Office on Homelessness. This section also appropriates \$625,000 to the grant and aid program within The Department of Children and Families Services from the General Revenue Fund for fiscal year 2001-2002 to fund one position in each of the 25 homeless coalitions in Florida. Each coalition is eligible to receive \$25,000. This section also appropriates \$197,668 to the grant and aid program for services to homeless within the Department of Children and Families Services from the General Revenue Fund for fiscal year 2001-2002. This appropriation funds an increase in their annual appropriation. This section also transfers \$5 million from the local government housing trust fund to the Office on Homelessness within the Department of Children and Family Services to fund Homeless Housing Assistance grants as created in section 9 of this act.

**Section 18.** An effective date of July 1, 2001, is provided.

## II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

### A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

#### 1. Revenues:

None

#### 2. Expenditures:

The Department of Children and Families will incur costs in providing support for the newly created State Office on Homelessness and the Council on Homelessness.

The committee substitute appropriates \$3 million to fund these administrative costs and the Challenge Grants created in section 9.

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation will incur additional administrative costs in compiling the information regarding the number of homeless persons served under each housing program administered by the corporation.

The Affordable Housing Study Commission may incur additional costs in analyzing solutions and programs to address the state's need for housing for the homeless.

**B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:**

1. Revenues:

This bill has no direct impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

This bill has no direct impact on local government expenditures.

**C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:**

Providers of services to the homeless, which includes affordable housing, will benefit from the "Challenge Grants" and the "Homeless Housing Assistance Grants" provided for in this committee substitute.

**D. FISCAL COMMENTS:**

None

**III. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:**

**A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:**

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to expend funds or to take action requiring the expenditure of funds.

**B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:**

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

**C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:**

This bill does not reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

**IV. COMMENTS:**

**A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:**

N/A

**B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:**

The Department of Children and Families, with input from the Council on Homelessness, must adopt rules relating to the grants.

**C. OTHER COMMENTS:**

The Department of Children and Families, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the Department of Veterans Affairs are proponents of the bill as introduced and CS/HB 427.

The Department of Health submitted the following comments for HB 427, as introduced and still applies to the CS/HB 427:

There should be some concern about the risk of exposure of children to communicable diseases, especially airborne diseases such as tuberculosis. A recent occurrence in a south Florida county provides an example of the workload and turmoil that can be created. In this instance, a child was admitted to school without documentation that a skin test had been performed. A subsequent diagnosis of tuberculosis generated a tremendous workload for health care professionals in just dealing with the fear and concerns of school staff, students and parents in the two counties and multiple schools where the child had attended. In the schools and health department, the costs and workload were immediately and exponentially greater as all exposed staff and children needed to be screened with skin tests and possibly x-rays. In any cases involving families with multiple children in the schools, several classrooms would require records to be reviewed to determine if skin testing was appropriate (eliminating those with previous history of positive skin tests). Costs increase dramatically if, as a result of this exposure, some of the students and staff required medication and direct observation to assure that they were complying with the medication regimen.

School health nurses have been integral partners in assuring that to the extent possible, all children receive the same follow up to assure access to services. In those schools with assigned nurses, this proposal is not anticipated to have any significant impact in the follow up routines.

The Florida Coalition for the Homeless (FCH) expresses strong support for HB 427, as introduced and for CS/HB 427 as an important response by the State to address the crisis of homelessness in Florida.

**V. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:**

On March 16, 2001, the House Committee on Local Government & Veterans Affairs considered HB 427, adopted one strike-everything amendment, and approved the bill as a committee substitute. The committee substitute includes the substance of the bill as filed, some modifications to the bill as filed, and additional provisions to address the problems of homelessness in Florida.

**VI. SIGNATURES:**

**COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT & VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

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Terri S. Boggis

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Joan Highsmith-Smith