

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

FILE NUMBER: H. F. 10

DATE: March 11, 1999

Version: First Engrossment

Authors: Pawlenty and others

Subject: School Stability for Homeless Children

Analyst: Wendy Simons, 651-296-5052

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Overview

This bill would allow the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to establish a demonstration project within the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) focusing on families with school-age children and unaccompanied youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The school stability demonstration project would allow certain expenditures not permitted under FHPAP, including acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction of transitional or permanent housing, as well as rental assistance for periods of over 24 months.

Background: The Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) was established by the legislature in 1993. FHPAP provides for grants to counties, groups of counties, or county-sponsored nonprofits who agree to focus their emergency response efforts on homelessness prevention and securing housing for homeless families. The program specifies desired outcomes for local applicants, including preventing homelessness, shortening the length of shelter stays, and decreasing repeated periods of homelessness, but does not specify the means for reaching the desired outcomes.

- 1 School stability initiative.** States that the purpose of the act is to provide stable, affordable housing for homeless children and their families and to promote social services that keep children in school.
- 2 School stability demonstration.**
 - (a) Authorizes the Minnesota housing finance agency together with the interagency task force on homelessness to establish a demonstration project under the family homelessness prevention and assistance program for the purpose of securing stable housing for families with school-age children and unaccompanied youth. Defines unaccompanied youth as minors leaving foster care or correction facilities, or who meet the statutory definition of a "child in need of services or protection."
 - (b) Requires the agency to target demonstration projects to communities with schools experiencing high student mobility.

(c) Requires demonstration projects in turn to target families with children under age 12 who have changed homes or schools at least once in the last 12 months or who have been absent from school at least 15 percent of the school year and who are at high risk of homelessness, as well as unaccompanied youth in need of alternative residential settings. Requires demonstration projects to connect families with social services designed to keep families in their current homes and with job training programs. Allows demonstration projects to provide rental assistance to a family for over 24 months provided the family has applied for Section 8 assistance.

(d) Allows grants under the demonstration project to be used to acquire, rehabilitate, or construct transitional or permanent housing.

(e) Requires grantees under the demonstration project to include representatives from the local school district and the local community correction agencies on its advisory board.

3 Appropriation. Appropriates an unspecified amount in state fiscal year 2000 to the housing development fund for administering the school stability demonstration project.