



The current economic crisis and related family stress threaten to create new waves of family conflict and youth homelessness. Prior to COVID-19, the U.S. Department of Education reported that over 1.5 million students were experiencing homelessness while enrolled in school. Over 80% of those children were staying in situations outside of the purview of formalized systems of care. Voices of Youth Count, from Chapin Hall, found that 1 in 30 minors between 13 and 17 years of age, not with a parent or guardian, experience homelessness in a 12 month period whether they were in school, or not. Being disconnected from systems of care, including schools and community-based organizations, while fighting to meet basic needs, leaves children and youth particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The Emergency Family Stabilization Act will support programs to keep families together and decrease out-of-home placements, as well as prevent trafficking by filling critical needs of parents and youth.

It is vital that the local agencies to which families and youth most closely rely upon are able to immediately meet the emergency needs of all families and youth experiencing homelessness or struggling with pandemic-related vulnerabilities (especially those who are ineligible or unserved by other systems). By stabilizing children, youth and families directly, programs will fill the gaps in basic necessities that predators use to lure children and youth into trafficking situations. This results in preventing homelessness, reducing trauma, and combating the spread of the virus.

Pandemic-related vulnerability factors

- Increased **poverty rates** due to job losses in many industries;
- Job losses have led to families facing **evictions** with no savings left to pay back-rent;
- **Intimate Partner Violence** is rising as victims are isolated with abusers, but there are less opportunities for victims to reach out for help;
- **Substance use and addiction** within the home has become more prevalent; and
- **Adolescents** do not want to be a further strain on their families and are leaving, or looking for ways to **make supplemental income**.

The Emergency Family Stabilization Act (S.220) accomplishes these goals by:

- Creating a new emergency funding stream through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for local agencies that currently receive ACF grants, or have experience in serving children, families, unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, and survivors.



- Providing \$800 million in direct flexible funding to meet the unique needs of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness and imminently at-risk of being trafficked in the wake of the coronavirus.
- Investing in critical services such as outreach, trafficking prevention, case management, and housing navigation while emphasizing trauma-informed and positive youth development services and strength-based family interventions.
- Giving special consideration to the needs of families experiencing domestic violence, survivors of sexual assault or human trafficking, pregnant women, pregnant and parenting youth, children under age 6, children with disabilities, and historically marginalized and underserved communities of color.
- Allowing funds for a wide range of basic needs, emergency housing, health, education, and safety-related activities; including but not limited to purchasing food, hygiene supplies, PPE, mental health services, transportation services, emergency childcare, communications and connectivity needs, education, training and employment-related needs, eviction prevention, motel stays, assistance in seeking housing placements, assistance in accessing unemployment and other federal benefits.
- Setting aside specific funding for tribes, tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations and ensures funds are distributed to urban, rural, and suburban areas.

Current Cosponsors:

Senators Murkowski (R-AK), Manchin (D-WV), Collins (R-ME), Sinema (D-AZ), Shaheen (D-NH), Schatz (D-HI), Hassan (D-NH), Casey (D-PA), Hirono (D-HI), Kelly (D-AZ), Sullivan (R-AK), and Rosen (D-NV).

Learn More & Cosponsor:

- Anna.Dietderich@murkowski.senate.gov; Thomas.Lucas@manchin.senate.gov
- Visit <https://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/bring-justice/> to access Shared Hope's research and advocacy resources.
- For technical assistance, visit: <https://sharedhope.org/legislative-technical-assistance/>