



Homeless Education Improvement Act of 2007

Background: On July 27, 2007, Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R-13th/IL) was joined by Congressman Raúl Grijalva (D-7th/AZ) and Congressman John P. Sarbanes (D-3rd/MD) in introducing the Homeless Education Improvement Act, H.R. 3205. H.R. 3205 builds upon effective law and lessons learned by schools, service providers, families, and youth. It includes many of the recommendations for amendments to the McKinney-Vento Act and Title I, Part A that came out of focus groups organized by NAEHCY and NLCHP.

Action Needed: Please call or write your U.S. Representative and urge him or her to join as co-sponsor of H.R. 3205. The more co-sponsors the legislation gathers, the greater the likelihood that its provisions will be incorporated into the larger No Child Left Behind reauthorization legislation to be introduced this Fall. Contact information for U.S. Representatives may be found at <http://www.house.gov>

Bill Summary:

Increases School Stability: The high rates of residential mobility of homeless students disrupt learning and create significant obstacles to academic achievement. H.R. 3205 addresses the impact of mobility by amending Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to:

- Ensure that homeless children and youth stay in their schools of origin because it is presumed to be in their best interest, except if 1) doing so is contrary to the wishes of their parent or guardian, or 2) specific, student-centered factors demonstrate that staying in the school of origin is not in a student's best interest.
- Increase educational continuity when children and youth must enroll in new schools by requiring schools to immediately send school records to the enrolling schools, including records needed for academic placement decisions.
- Establish a dedicated funding stream at the state level to support the transportation of homeless children and youth to their schools of origin, and to support other transportation needs.
- Expressly authorize the use of Title I, Part A funds for transportation to stabilize the education of homeless children and youth.

Enhances School Support: The designation of a liaison for homeless students in every school district is among the most successful features of the McKinney-Vento program. Liaisons coordinate school district efforts to support homeless students through identification, enrollment, coordinating services inside the school and with the community, staff training, and other activities. H.R. 3205 amends Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to:

- Require that liaisons have sufficient time, resources, and training to satisfactorily carry out the duties required by the Act.

- Require liaisons to participate in the professional development and technical assistance offered by the state coordinator.

Addresses the Needs of Unique Subpopulations: Certain sub-populations of homeless students – in particular, young children and unaccompanied youth – face special challenges in accessing educational services. H.R. 3205 amends Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to:

- Require state-funded and LEA-funded preschool programs to identify and prioritize young homeless children for enrollment.
- Improve the academic progress and high school graduation rate of unaccompanied homeless youth by addressing guardianship barriers, credit accrual problems and access to credit recovery opportunities.

Doubles the Authorized Funding Level for the McKinney-Vento Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth program: Last year, public schools identified and enrolled 907,228 homeless children and youth, grades K-12. This represents an increase of 38% from the previous year. Forty-three out of fifty states reported increases in the number of homeless children identified and enrolled. Yet only half of these students were enrolled in school districts that receive McKinney-Vento funding. H.R. 3205 amends the Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to:

- Raise the authorized funding level to \$140 million. The current authorized funding level is \$70 million. \$61.9 million was appropriated in FY2007.

Improves Opportunities for Academic Success: Homeless students face unique barriers to participating in the full range of academic support opportunities offered by schools, including those provided through Title I, Part A. H.R. 3205 increases opportunities for academic success by amending Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to:

- Require a needs assessment, including the involvement of the homeless liaison, in determining the amount of Title I, Part A funds that are set-aside to support the education of homeless students.
- Require local Title I, Part A plans to describe the amount of funds reserved, the needs assessment conducted to determine the amount of funds reserved, how the amount of funds reserved is related to the needs assessment, and the collaborative role of the liaison in determining the amount of funds reserved and the services provided.

The Inclusion of Children in Foster Care: H.R. 3205 is a first step in laying the foundation for McKinney-Vento and Title I provisions in the forthcoming No Child Left Behind Act reauthorization. It uses the lessons learned and best practices of liaisons and State Coordinators to make improvements to the core requirements of McKinney-Vento Act and Title I Part A, which will increase the school enrollment, attendance, and success of all McKinney-Vento eligible children. The next step is to expand eligibility to include all children in foster care while increasing program capacity and developing procedures for the smooth and effective implementation of this expansion of eligibility. NAEHCY has advocated for this position and expects it to be addressed in legislation to be introduced in September.

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