

HB 4087 – Homeless and Runaway Youth

Supporting Testimony

Good afternoon, Mr./Madame Chair. My name is _____ and I rise in support of HB 4087.

Mr./Madame Chair, the effects of homelessness on youth in Michigan affects thousands. According to a study done by the University of Michigan indicated that in 2019, over 20,000 high school students reported being homeless within the last 30 days prior to the study being conducted. In many cases, these homeless youth stated that they were estranged from their parents due to being kicked out of their home, abandoned, or running away. This means that a growing number of the population have no access to parents or their consent for medical treatment.

Mr./Madame chair, I would like you to suppose for a moment that you are the manager of a local nonprofit dedicated to helping runaway youth. One stormy night, a 15-year-old girl comes to your door with a baby in her arms. Both are suffering as they are drenched from head to toe and freezing, and you want to help them. So, you take them inside, but you discover that the young mother has developed a horrible cough that you assume is a sign of bronchitis. You want to treat her, but contacting her parents could take hours if not days, and you have reason to suspect, based on the bruising on her hands, that some level of abuse may also be at play. But you still want to render help. Under Michigan law, parental consent is required to render medical care. And so, your hands are tied, and you can do nothing to evaluate or treat her.

Mr./Madam Chair, the fact that anyone should endure this, urgently needing medical attention while being blocked by procedural practice, is a tragedy. But the fact that this is so wide spread of an issue, because it affects so many youth should give you concern. If 20,000 youth are at risk of lacking proper medical care then we are faced with a humanitarian crisis. These young people need help, and it is the obligation of this state to remove the barriers to that help.

Consider also how this will positively impact parents. Suppose you are a parent whose child has runaway. You've been desperately waiting to hear if your daughter has been found. One night you get a call from one of the shelters. They say, "*Mr/Ms _____, we've been trying to reach you for the last two days but weren't able to find your contact information. We've been monitoring your daughter for a while and she's become quite ill. Unfortunately, we have not been able to evaluate or treat her without your consent. Her condition is worsening, and we fear she will not recover.*" As a parent, I can say that I would much prefer to hear that the medical staff had done everything they could to treat my child even if they could not reach me. Making sure that she is alive and healthy is the most important concern to me as a parent.

Mr./Madame chair, the youth of our youth need to be provided with a safety net to protect children of this great state, and this provides us the opportunity to do that. I urge you, for the sake of youth and parents across Michigan, vote yes of HB 4087. The people of this state deserve to know that its children are taken care of. I will gladly take questions at this time.

Article

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