
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 6555

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a seven-member commission on homelessness, within the legislative branch, to review existing and proposed housing policies and advise the General Assembly on the following:

1. strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness;
2. coordinating services and providing services and support for individuals and families experiencing homelessness (e.g., health care, education, and employment training);
3. providing emergency shelter and long-term housing solutions for these individuals and families; and
4. the availability and accessibility of affordable housing in Connecticut.

Under the bill, the commission is empowered to get any necessary help and data available from executive departments, boards, commissions, or other state agencies to carry out its purposes. Additionally, it may (1) accept gifts, donations, or bequests for the purpose of performing its duties; (2) establish bylaws; and (3) do anything else necessary and appropriate to carry out its duties.

The bill requires the (1) chairperson to schedule the commission's first meeting and hold it by October 1, 2023, and (2) commission to report on its findings and recommendations to the Housing Committee by July 1, 2024, and then annually.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

Under the bill, the commission consists of the Department of Housing (DOH) commissioner, or her designee, and six members whom the legislative leaders appoint. The legislative appointees may be General Assembly members and must have certain qualifications, as shown in the table below.

Table: Commission on Homelessness — Legislative Appointees

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Required Qualifications</i>
House speaker	Expertise in homelessness policies and programs
Senate president pro tempore	Expertise in fair housing protections
House majority leader	Represents a homeless service provider
Senate majority leader	Represents a low-income housing advocacy organization
House minority leader	Represents a landlord association
Senate minority leader	Represents a faith-based organization that provides services to households experiencing homelessness

The bill requires the legislative leaders to (1) make their initial appointments no later than 60 days after the bill's passage and (2) fill any vacancies. Members serve three-year terms and may serve until a successor is appointed. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore jointly appoint the chairperson.

Commission members are not paid, but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses within available funds.

COMMISSION MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES

The bill requires the commission to meet quarterly and stipulates that any member is deemed to have resigned if he or she does not attend (1) three consecutive meetings or (2) 50% of the meetings held during a calendar year. A majority of the members constitutes a quorum to transact business.

COMMISSION STAFFING

Under the bill, the commission has no authority over staffing or personnel matters and any needed staff must be employed by the Joint Committee on Legislative Management, which has authority over the hiring, termination, and performance review of this staff. However, the

bill also (1) requires the commission to employ staff as necessary to carry out its duties, subject to the State Personnel Act (i.e., the state employee civil service laws) and (2) allows it to enter into contracts as needed to discharge its duties, within its appropriated funds and following established procedures. (These provisions appear to conflict with the Committee on Legislative Management's authority over commission employment.)

COMMITTEE ACTION

Housing Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 15 Nay 0 (03/02/2023)