

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2007

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable James Walsh
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

As supporters of homeless children and youth, we urge you to increase appropriations for the only two federal programs targeted to these highly vulnerable young people. We recommend \$140 million in FY2008 for **Runaway and Homeless Youth Act** programs, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and \$70 million in FY 2008 for the **Education for Homeless Children and Youth** program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs provide critical outreach, shelter (basic centers), and transitional living resources to the nation's unaccompanied youth. RHYA basic centers and transitional living projects serve nearly 300,000 youth in all 50 states. RHYA street outreach projects make over 2.3 million contacts with youth annually.

RHYA programs are cost-effective alternatives to public custodial care. The average cost of serving a youth in a transitional living project is \$11,877, a mere fraction of the public dollars expended on costly juvenile justice systems with average annual costs ranging between \$25,000 – \$55,000 per youth. RHYA programs have also demonstrated a proven track record of raising achievement levels for homeless youth. The last federally-funded evaluation of RHYA programs demonstrated strong outcomes in the areas of education, employment, family strengthening, and personal savings to help youth make a successful transition into a productive adulthood.

Since RHYA's passage in 1974, there has been a consistent unmet need for services due to insufficient funding. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that in FY 2005, **2,655 youth seeking services from RHYA transitional living projects were turned away**. In addition, **2,081 youth were turned away from RHYA basic centers**. These figures represent youth that have been directed to an RHYA service provider. The turnaway figures would be undoubtedly higher were countless other young people living on the streets of America also to request RHYA services. It is a tragedy that the most basic need of our nation's unaccompanied children and youth – a place to live – is not being met due to inadequate resources. Accordingly, we recommend \$140 million in FY2008 for Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs.

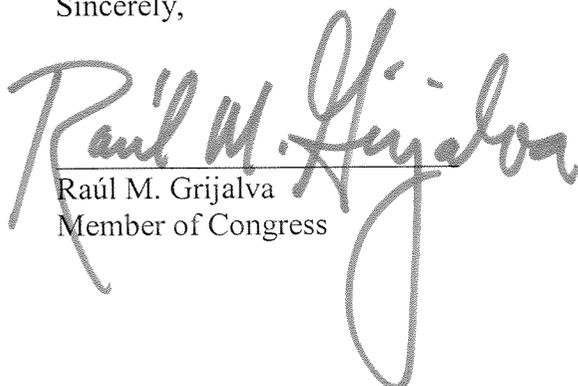
The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program removes barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in school. Congress established the EHCY to assist state and local educational agencies in implementing educational rights for homeless children and youth provided by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Local school districts receiving EHCY funds as subgrants from state educational agencies use their moneys for outreach and identification, enrollment assistance, transportation assistance, school records transfer, immunization referrals, tutoring, counseling, school supplies, assessment, professional development for educators, and referrals for community services targeted to homeless students.

A March 2006 U.S. Department of Education report on the EHCY program concluded that “states and local educational agencies (LEAs) have generally made significant progress in reducing the barriers that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. The legislation has prompted States and LEAs to focus more on the needs of homeless students and has helped facilitate the expansion of local support networks to meet those needs...Although the appropriation levels for this program are relatively small, the impact of the program has been very widespread.” Federal data collection also reveals that, over the past four years, the participation and proficiency rates of homeless students have increased in reading and math assessments.

Despite these successes, the extremely limited resources available to the EHCY program have created challenges for schools in fully implementing the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act and in reaching all children and youth experiencing homelessness. **In the 2005-2006 school year, 914,255 homeless children and youth (K-12) were identified and enrolled in public school; this is a 50% increase from the 2003-2004 school year.** Almost half of students identified by local educational agencies as homeless are in school districts that do not receive subgrants. Increased funding for the EHCY program would allow significantly more homeless children and youth to receive the services they need to succeed. It would also enable more schools to provide a greater level of support to children experiencing homelessness, particularly the outreach, enrollment assistance, referral, counseling, and transportation services that are essential in ensuring school access and stability. Accordingly, we recommend \$70 million in FY 2008 for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to fully support Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs and the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program.

Sincerely,


Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress


Judy Biggers
Member of Congress

Robert. Bush

Shirley Jackson

Tommy Baldwin

Ken A. Wayman

Jim Moran

Danny K. Davis

Pete Stark

Hyd D. Doggett

Cale E. Cline

Dana DeLuca

Jack Ruby

Lubin Hamjara

Cielyn B. Mulaney

George Miller

Wendell

Wesley

Madeline J. Bordullo

Alison E. Watson

Flowers

Ann A Davis

Eddie Binn Johnson

Hilda Ellis

Lois Capps

Stephanie Hughes

Ess Carah

R. D. Mene

Jim Mathew

Tom Ah

Rust Holt