

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 126

WHEREAS, housing constitutes one of the basic needs of all families and individuals within the State of New Jersey, and safe and affordable housing creates a foundation for stable lives, secure families, and thriving communities; and

WHEREAS, the State has among the costliest housing markets in the United States and average wages have failed to keep pace with the average cost of housing in the State for at least two decades, causing many individuals and families to spend increasing proportions of their income on housing and causing others to live in overcrowded, inaccessible, unsafe, or unsanitary conditions simply because they have no other option; and

WHEREAS, significant numbers of individuals and families in New Jersey, through illness, low wages, the loss of a job, divorce or family conflict, or struggles with mental health or substance abuse, lose their ability to earn a sufficient income or obtain adequate benefits to remain in their homes; and

WHEREAS, over the course of each year, thousands of individuals and families lose their housing and become homeless; and

WHEREAS, the multiple economic, social, physical, and emotional consequences of an episode of homelessness often exacerbate the factors that led to an individual's or family's loss of housing, thereby making it even more challenging for a single person or a family to regain housing and recreate a stable home; and

WHEREAS, multiple State agencies, commissions, and boards working in fields as diverse as housing, health care, employment, hunger, education, mental health and substance abuse treatment assist individuals and families to remain in their homes with a range of economic and social programs, and these agencies, commissions, and boards, as well as other organizations, also are charged with helping homeless individuals and families to obtain stable housing; and

WHEREAS, all these State agencies, commissions, and boards share the common goals of preventing and eliminating homelessness, especially chronic homelessness; and

WHEREAS, coordinating the work of these State entities will help to foster necessary system changes and maximize the impact of federal, State, and local governmental programs and nonprofit and voluntary efforts to help individuals and families remain in their homes and, if they become homeless, to speed their return to housing;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JON S. CORZINE, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. There is hereby established in the Department of Community Affairs the Interagency Council on Preventing and Reducing Homelessness (the "Council").

2. The Council shall be comprised as follows: (i) the Commissioners of the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Senior Services, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Executive Director of the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, the Chairman of the State Parole Board, the Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and a representative of the Office of the Governor, each of whom shall serve ex officio and may appoint a designee; and (ii) 14 public members appointed by the Governor as follows: a representative of county government, a representative of municipal government, two persons who are or recently were homeless, two representatives of the private sector, four representatives of non-profit agencies providing housing, social, behavioral health, or health-care services to homeless individuals or families, a representative of public housing authorities, an individual with academic expertise in homelessness issues, and two representatives from faith communities. In addition, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Senate Minority Leader, and the Assembly Minority Leader each may appoint a member of the Legislature to serve on the Council, and that member may appoint a designee.
3. The Commissioners of the Departments of Community Affairs (DCA) and Human Services (DHS) shall act as co-chairs of the Council.
4. The public members of the Council shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor and without compensation, except that members who are or recently were homeless may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses within funds available to DCA or DHS.
5. The Council shall meet on a regular basis, as determined by the co-chairs.
6. The Council shall:
 - a. Prepare a preliminary report to the Governor by or before December 31, 2009, containing findings and recommendations for preventing and reducing homelessness, ending chronic homelessness, and improving services to individuals and families who lose their housing, and additional reports as the Council may deem necessary;
 - b. Review data, activities, funding, and programs in areas including but not limited to housing, health care, employment, education, and mental health and substance abuse services that (i) help individuals and families at-risk of becoming homeless retain their housing and (ii) provide housing and other services for individuals and families who become homeless;
 - c. Identify statutory and regulatory impediments to the effective provision of services to homeless individuals and families and recommend changes to relevant laws, programs, and policies;

- d. Review service delivery models and examine best practices to maximize the cost effectiveness of those models and their results; and
 - e. Examine and evaluate programs and activities to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness and to assist homeless families and individuals.
7. The Council shall organize and meet as soon as practicable after the appointment of a majority of its members.
 8. Staffing for the Council shall be undertaken and coordinated by DCA and DHS. The Council shall seek information and advice, conduct hearings, and take testimony from individuals and families at-risk of losing their homes, or who have lost their housing; providers of housing or services to such persons; research organizations; and others to fulfill its duties.
 9. The Council is authorized to call upon any department, division, office, or agency of State government to provide such information, resources, or other assistance deemed necessary to discharge its responsibilities under this Order. Each department, division, office, and agency of this State is hereby required, to the extent not inconsistent with law, to cooperate with the Council and to furnish it with such information, personnel, and assistance as is necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Order.
 10. The Council shall operate until December 31, 2011. This period may be extended by Executive Order.
 11. This Order shall take effect immediately.

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