
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7188

AN ACT CONCERNING HOMELESSNESS AND THE CHESS PROGRAM.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes several requirements on provider payment rates and priority for services under the Connecticut Housing Engagement and Support Services (CHESS) initiative, a Medicaid program to improve outcomes for people with complex health conditions who have experienced homelessness and would likely benefit from targeted services. The Department of Social Services (DSS) currently administers CHESS under a Medicaid state plan and a federal waiver.

The bill also creates an oversight committee to review services for homeless people in the state, including CHESS initiative services. The bill requires the DSS, Department of Housing (DOH), and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) commissioners to file quarterly reports on these services with the oversight committee and seek approval of any changes to these services, including changes to the CHESS program. The oversight committee, which includes the commissioners as members, must schedule and hold a vote on the changes within 30 days after receiving notice from the commissioners. (The bill appears to require committee approval prior to DOH, DSS, or DMHAS implementing any changes.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

CHANGES TO THE CHESS INITIATIVE

The bill generally aligns CHESS provider payment rates with those for DMHAS's supportive housing program. The bill requires the administrative service organization that manages the CHESS initiative to ensure that CHESS providers get the same reimbursement rates as providers in DMHAS's supportive housing program. It requires the DSS

commissioner, in consultation with the DOH and DMHAS commissioners, to ensure that providers for the DHMAS program do not receive a rate cut when they participate in the CHESS initiative.

The bill requires the DSS commissioner, in consultation with the DOH commissioner, to amend the Medicaid state plan amendment for the CHESS initiative to:

1. ensure that CHESS initiative eligibility criteria and provider payment rates match those for DMHAS's supportive housing program;
2. set provider rates that are comparable to those provided in other states for pre-tenancy supports (help locating and securing stable housing) and tenancy-sustaining services (help maintaining successful tenancy, including help with health care coordination, skill development, and community integration);
3. set a minimum per person per month rate for providers for each CHESS initiative participant they serve; and
4. give newly enrolled, unhoused CHESS participants priority for any available housing assistance vouchers (DOH typically administers housing assistance voucher programs (e.g., the state rental assistance program)).

(It is unclear how DSS can both match the CHESS rates to DMHAS rates and set CHESS rates comparable to other states' rates.)

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP

Under the bill, the oversight committee consists of the following members or their designees:

1. chairpersons of the Housing, Human Services, Planning and Development, and Public Health committees;
2. the DMHAS, DOH, and DSS commissioners; and
3. the interagency council on affordable housing chairperson.

The oversight committee also includes two representatives of private nonprofit organizations that serve homeless people in the state, appointed by the oversight committee's chairpersons, which, under the bill, are the House Housing Committee chairperson and the Senate Human Services Committee chairperson, or their designees.

The bill requires the oversight committee to (1) meet within 60 days after the bill passes and (2) review services for homeless people in the state.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 17 Nay 5 (03/18/2025)