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CONTACT: Annie Pham, (916) 319-2025

Annie.Pham@asm.ca.gov

CALIFORNIA REVAMPS RULES FOR AGENCIES PROVIDING CARE TO YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

(SACRAMENTO, CA) – Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation to help shelters better serve youth that are homeless or at the risk of homelessness. AB 1235 by Assemblymember Kansen Chu (D-San Jose) expands the categories of youth who can be served at safety net shelters and also allows for longer stays. It makes reforms that were brought to Assemblymember Chu by the Bill Wilson Center, which provides emergency shelter for youth who are homeless in Santa Clara County. AB 1235 was sponsored by the Bill Wilson Center and John Burton Advocates for Youth.

“I want to thank Governor Newsom for recognizing that my bill, AB 1235, is needed to address youth homelessness and to bolster the work by nonprofit organizations that work with youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness,” said Assemblymember Chu. “Organizations like the Bill Wilson Center are on the front lines, and we must do everything in our power to better enable them to continue their important work. This bill gives them the ability to assist youth who are at risk of becoming homeless while also providing the shelters more time to meet the needs of youth who are already homeless.”

AB 1235 has three provisions. First, it renames facilities currently called “runaway and homeless youth shelters” to “youth homelessness prevention centers”. This was done to stop the use of the inaccurate term “runaways” and to refocus attention on the preventative work done at these comprehensive care facilities. The second provision of the bill increases the categories of youth who can be served at the centers to include those at risk of homelessness, and it also creates a definition for being “at risk of homelessness” in California law. Finally, the bill expands the number of nights youth can stay at these facilities. Current law limits these short term stays to 21 nights. While the vast majority of youth can be reunited with family or placed in longer-term housing within that time frame, some youth have complex case management needs that cannot be met within 21 nights. AB 1235 allows for longer stays, when needed, to best serve youth experiencing homelessness.

Sparky Harlan, CEO of the Bill Wilson Center, shared, “Thanks to AB 1235, youth at risk of homelessness will now have access to 90 days of emergency housing and support services to help them reunite with their families or find alternative stable housing.”

AB 1235 was signed as part of a larger package of bills focused on homelessness. Governor Newsom has already committed to a historic \$1 billion budget investment to tackle homelessness, and he has also signed thirteen new bills into law to address the homelessness crisis.

“AB 1235 prevents adult chronic homelessness by improving our ability to address the growing issue of youth homelessness,” said Amy Lemley, the Executive Director of John Burton Advocates for Youth. “Thank you Assemblymember Chu, Governor Newsom, and the California State Legislature for making homeless youth a priority for California.”

Assemblymember Kansen Chu is proud to represent the 25th Assembly District, comprised of the cities of Fremont, Milpitas, Newark, Santa Clara, and San Jose.

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