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The current rules governing shelters for youth experiencing homelessness are outdated and do not accurately reflect the situations that many youth experiencing homelessness find themselves in. (Ex. Youth homelessness frequently last more than 30 days and having policies that assume that youth homelessness is contained to a 30 day stay harms youth!)

These rules end up creating unsafe situations for youth (ex. Pre-pandemic youth had to spend every 31st night not at the shelter to reset the 30-night cap on their shelter stay), and they create administrative hurdles for staff, who should be focused on providing quality services to youth (ex. Having to get a waiver every time we are unable to contact youth's parents/guardians within 30 days).

Changing the "30-day rule" is critical for ensuring the safety of youth experiencing homelessness. Pre-pandemic, when youth were forced to spend every 31st night not in the shelter, to reset their 30-day shelter stay limit, many youth had to enter into unsafe conditions for that night, including sleeping outside/unsheltered, with unsafe individuals, and more. This rule directly jeopardizes youth safety and must be changed.

The fact that staff have to notify clients' guardians & get permission for them to be in the shelter's care within 30 days of them entering the shelter creates unnecessary administrative hurdles for staff who should be spending their time focusing on the needs of those clients. At the TC/JKTS, each time we are unable to do this we must get a waiver from DHHS. The rule change from 30 to 90 days would allow us to not have to get a waiver from DHHS each time and allow us to focus on serving our clients!

Extending this period is also important given that youth homelessness is often rooted in family conflict. This bill would also increase the funding provided to homeless youth shelters from \$2,000,000 annually to \$2,500,000 annually. This increase in funding is necessary in making sure that youth experiencing homelessness have access to shelter that can adequately meet their needs!

Youth face many unique vulnerabilities when experiencing homelessness and as a state, we must invest in keeping them safe! We need to invest in our youth!