

HB 203/SB 260: Relating to Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

What is the purpose of HB 203/SB 260?

HB 203/SB 260 would allow homeless youth to consent to treatment for themselves and their children.

- ▶ Qualified youth would be issued a certificate that would allow consent to treatment for medical, dental, psychological, substance abuse, surgical diagnosis and treatment, and preventive care.
- ▶ The youth would also be able to consent to treatment on behalf of his or her child, if the youth is unmarried and has custody of the child.

Why is HB 203/SB 260 necessary?

Homeless youth face unique problems.

- ▶ 39% of the homeless population is young people under 18. Youth ages 12 to 17 are more likely to become homeless than adults.
- ▶ More than 50% of young people in shelters and on the streets report that their parents told them to leave or knew they were leaving and didn't care. The average age a teen becomes homeless is 14.7 years.
- ▶ 46% of homeless youth left their homes because of physical abuse. 17% left because of sexual abuse.

Homeless teens face barriers to health care and other services.

- ▶ Generally, only those persons 18 and over can give consent to their own routine medical and dental care. Youth under 18 need the consent of a parent or legal guardian to receive any care other than emergency life-threatening conditions and other extreme circumstances.
- ▶ Unaccompanied youth often have no contact with their parents and may not know where their parents are. As a result, many unaccompanied youth cannot access routine medical and dental care. Routine infections and illnesses go untreated, and relatively minor conditions worsen until they become emergencies. In addition to creating a public health hazard, this places the basic health and safety of the youth at risk.
- ▶ Thirty states in the United States have passed laws to ensure that youth on their own can obtain basic care.

How would HB 203/SB 260 help?

HB 203/SB 260 would allow youth and their children access to the care they need.

- ▶ HB 203/SB 260 would reduce medical expenses and public health hazards by allowing youth to access medical, dental, and mental health care before it becomes an emergency.
- ▶ It would prevent revictimizing these youth by forcing them to contact parents who are unavailable and/or abusive.

Please help homeless youth by voting "YES" on HB 203/SB 260!