

# YOUTH FACING HOMELESSNESS ACT



**Sponsor: Lorainy Gonzalez, Paterson**

**AN ACT concerning supporting the homeless struggling with addiction and preventing harassment faced by youth from homeless individuals dealing with addiction**

**Be it enacted that this Act, concerning the support of homeless individuals struggling with addiction and the prevention of harassment faced by youth from homeless individuals dealing with addiction, is hereby adopted and shall be implemented as law to promote public health, safety, and well-being, effective May 2025.**

## **Section I:**

1. As used in this act:
  - a. Homelessness: The term "homelessness" refers to individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
  - b. Addiction: The term "addiction" refers to a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug-seeking behavior, continued use despite harmful consequences, and long-lasting changes in the brain.
  - c. Youth: The term "youth" refers to individuals under the age of 18 who are living in or near public spaces, including schools and recreational areas.
  - d. Harassment: The term "harassment" refers to unwanted and aggressive behaviors or actions that create an intimidating, hostile, or abusive environment, particularly towards youth.

## **Section II: Comprehensive Support for Homeless Individuals Struggling with Addiction**

1. Access to Treatment and Rehabilitation Services:
  - a. The state must establish or expand access to addiction treatment centers and rehabilitation programs for the homeless in order to promote recovery and prevent homelessness in the future.
  - b. These centers shall provide medical, psychological, and social services to address both the physical and mental health needs of individuals struggling with addiction.

- c. The state will allocate funding to establish temporary and long-term housing for individuals undergoing addiction treatment.
- 2. Case Management and Social Support:
  - a. Case management services will be offered to homeless people to assist them in finding work, housing, and recovery.
  - b. The establishment of social support networks, such as peer support groups and mentorship, will aid people in recovering and finding their way back into society.

### **Section III:** Prevention of Harassment Against Youth

- 1. Public Safety and Awareness Campaign:
  - a. To increase awareness of youth safety and rights in public areas, the state will launch a public safety campaign. Reducing harassment and establishing secure spaces for young people will be the main goals of this campaign.
  - b. The campaign shall educate the public, particularly homeless individuals, about appropriate conduct in public spaces like school, bus stops, restaurants, city events, downtown/city hall area.
- 2. Support for Youth in Vulnerable Areas:
  - a. The state will provide funding for the establishment of safe places for young people, like community centers, shelters, and outdoor parks, in places where homelessness is common.
  - b. Local law enforcement shall collaborate with youth-serving organizations to ensure the safety of young people in high-risk areas.

### **Section IV:** Training for Law Enforcement and Public Service Providers

- 1. Training Programs:
  - a. In order to maintain safety and compassion, law enforcement personnel and public service providers must regularly get training on how to deal with homeless people, especially those who are addicted.
  - b. Training will also focus on identifying and addressing harassment complaints from youth in public areas.

### **Section V:** Funding and Implementation

- 1. State Appropriations:
  - a. The state shall issue \$3.5 million in funding for the purposes of establishing addiction treatment services, housing programs, and youth safety initiatives outlined in this Act.
- 2. Grants for Local Governments and Nonprofit Organizations:
  - a. The state shall provide grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations to implement the provisions of this Act at the community level.

**Effective Date:**

This Act shall take effect in May 2025

**Statement of Intent:**

This bill is structured to provide a balanced approach to helping the homeless population struggling with addiction, while ensuring the safety and well-being of the youth in the community. It includes provisions for treatment, prevention, education, and funding to ensure and effective execution.

**Author's Note:**

This bill aims to support homeless individuals struggling with addiction by providing access to treatment and housing, while also ensuring the safety of young people who might face harassment from homeless individuals dealing with addiction. It creates programs to help homeless people recover, find jobs, and rebuild their lives. At the same time, it establishes safe spaces for youth and raises awareness to prevent harassment in public areas. The goal is to help those in need while protecting young people, with funding provided to local governments and organizations to carry out these efforts.