

Homelessness Accountability Discussion

Overview:

California has experienced an alarming spike in homelessness over the past decade, with a significant increase in the number of unsheltered individuals in cities. The most recent [federal count](#) shows that California is home to half of all unsheltered people in the country, far surpassing any other state in the nation.

Cities are at the forefront of responding to this crisis, providing temporary and emergency housing and partnering with counties to help connect individuals with behavioral health services. Real solutions require collaborative partnerships between all levels of government, as well as a state investment that matches the scale of this crisis.

Legislative Outlook:

Last year, the Legislature and the Governor's Office were hyper-focused on modernizing California's behavioral health system to increase access to care, specifically among unhoused individuals. This included passing historic legislation such as the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE Court) program. While behavioral health-related legislation will continue to be a priority this year, the Legislature and the Governor' have shifted their focus to increasing local "accountability" for state homelessness funding.

Specifically, there is the perception from the Administration that major state investments in homelessness in recent years have not created meaningful reductions in the number of unhoused individuals statewide. This is because, despite more than \$15 billion in state spending on homelessness over the past two years, the number of unsheltered people has continued to rise. While the state's limited-term funding across a variety of programs achieved some effect, it did not stem the tide of individuals entering homelessness, which outpaced efforts to transition individuals experiencing homelessness into housing.

This shift in focus has been abundantly clear through several legislative hearings, the Governor's proposed state budget for the 2023-24 fiscal year, and several bills that have been introduced focused explicitly on accountability. Notably, these measures include:

AB 550 (Schiavo) Homelessness: Public Hearings.

This measure would:

- Require cities and counties to conduct a point-in-time count of homeless persons before January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter.
- Require cities and counties to hold a public hearing to present the data gathered and discuss plans to solve issues related to homelessness in that jurisdiction prior to January 1, 2026, and annually thereafter.
- Require cities and counties, 30 days before the public hearing, to publish the results of the data gathered during the point-in-time count on its website.
- Require cities and counties six months after the public hearing to develop a plan to reduce homelessness within that jurisdiction.

