

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
SENATE, No. 171
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

DATED: NOVEMBER 9, 2020

SUMMARY

Synopsis: Establishes grant program for homeless veterans shelters.

Type of Impact: Expenditure increase to the State General Fund.

Agencies Affected: Department of Military and Veterans’ Affairs.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
State Cost		Indeterminate	

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) projects indeterminate costs to the State from potential grant awards to its three southernmost counties to identify properties the counties would provide to the State for the development and operation of shelters for homeless veterans. Among other factors, the cost would be dependent on whether the counties would elect to seek the State grants, a decision the OLS cannot anticipate with a reasonable degree of certainty. The OLS anticipates, however, that the grant program would likely be a one-time initiative that could extend beyond a single fiscal year.
- The costs to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) to develop and administer the grant program would likely be absorbed within exiting departmental resources.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill would require the DMAVA to award grants to certain southern New Jersey counties to identify properties the counties would provide to the State for the development and operation of shelters for homeless veterans. Atlantic County, Cape May County, and Cumberland County would be eligible to submit grant applications to the department. The Legislature is anticipated to make future appropriations to the grant program.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

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In addition, the OLS notes that the costs to the DMAVA to develop and administer the grant program would likely be absorbed within existing departmental resources.

The OLS estimate assumes that the development and operation of veteran homeless shelters on sites proposed for that purpose by eligible counties under the grant program would be separate from the requirements established under this bill.

The following information describes several current federal, State, local, public-sector, and private-sector homeless veteran programs in New Jersey.

DMAVA's Transitional Housing Program, Veterans' Haven: The DMAVA operates Veterans' Haven, the State's transitional housing program for homeless veterans. Veterans Haven South is located on the grounds of the former Ancora Psychiatric Hospital. It is a 99-bed homeless veterans transitional housing facility funded by the DMAVA and supported by the United States Veterans Administration through a grant and per diem program established on 1 October 2017. Veterans Haven North, in turn, is located on the grounds of the former Senator Garrett W. Hagedorn Gero Psychiatric Hospital, in Glen Gardner, Lebanon Township. It is a 100-bed homeless veterans transitional housing facility funded by the DMAVA. The mission of the Veterans Haven program is to provide temporary housing, counseling, and occupational training for homeless veterans to assist them in their transition back into society. The program focuses on treatment, self-reclamation, and community integration through vocational training and job search assistance.

United States Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Campus: According to an article published by the Asbury Park Press entitled, *Housing for Homeless Vets Planned in N.J.*, a Parsippany-based community service agency is working with a private developer to build 63 apartments and townhouses on the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Campus in Lyons for homeless former service men and women suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome and other mental health problems. The project is funded by the United States Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs, and Labor departments in conjunction with a network of federally-funded community service agencies.

Interagency Council on Homelessness: The DMAVA maintains a working relationship with the Department of Human Services through the Interagency Council on Homelessness to identify and assist homeless veterans. The council was established by Executive Order 92 of 2012 to develop recommendations and provide a State Plan to end homelessness in New Jersey in ten years. In its Final Report to the Governor, the council concluded that the State needed to improve the collaboration of services for veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and made

specific recommendations. Among them, the council recommended that it would work with DMAVA and the regional Veterans' Integrated Service Networks to improve services for the State's veterans. In response to a FY 2018 OLS Discussion Point, the department indicated that "programs for homeless veterans continue to address the needs of this population utilizing a wide variety of agencies and private sector entities as they have been identified by the Interagency Council on Homelessness."

The programs for homeless veterans that continue to address the needs of the homeless populations include but are not limited to: Veterans Haven South, Veterans Haven North, United States Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Campuses, 35 homeless outreach teams, veterans' service officers, providers (Catholic Charities, Soldier On, etc.), local hospitals, parole and probation officers, local shelters, various grassroots and non-profit outreach teams, and others.

Tri-County Continuum of Care: The DMAVA also participates in the Tri-County Continuum of Care, which has recently instituted a coordinated assessment model for use amongst the contributing agencies. Agencies with housing opportunities will notify the Tri-County Continuum of Care thereof. From there, the lead agency pulls data from the DMAVA prioritization list to determine if any individuals fit the criteria for that housing opportunity and makes the connection between agencies if they do.

Comprehensive Emergency Assistance System: The department also participates in the local Comprehensive Emergency Assistance System Committee. The committee oversees a comprehensive system of services to the homeless including recommendations regarding State and federal funding and ongoing coordination and adaptation of services as required. The mission of these agencies is to reach zero homelessness within the areas that they serve.

Stand Downs: In addition, the department participates in all Stand Down events and local resource fairs in the area throughout the year. The department has identified veterans from these Stand Downs events for admission. This also provides an opportunity to link with new resource providers for veterans. The eligibility criteria are that an individual must be deemed a veteran by the federal guidelines, be eligible for United States Veterans Health Administration health care, and have an honorable discharge status.

Legal Assistance: There are several pro-bono legal resources, including Volunteer Lawyers for Justice, specifically geared toward assisting veterans with filing claims for benefits, having discharges upgraded and working on any standing legal issues they may have. Legal clinics are often held at least monthly at the local United States Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Campus.

Other Facilities:

- Home of the Brave (Camden)
- Joseph's House (Camden) Shelter
- Enphront Veterans Services (Atlantic City)
- Atlantic City Mission (Atlantic City)

Additional Information: The DMAVA also receives referrals from a multitude of agencies and organizations within the surrounding community, including local college veteran service departments, non-profits, veteran service officers, hospitals, prisons, parole and probation officers, and personal referrals made by friends or family of an identified homeless veteran.

FE to S171

4

Section: State Government

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).