

## **Supporting Florida's Homeless Students**

1 WHEREAS Families with children are the fastest growing homeless population, and

2 WHEREAS Since 2007, the Florida Department of Education has seen a dramatic increase in homeless and unstably housed students, and

3 WHEREAS Homeless children have much higher rates of emotional, behavioral, nutritional and other health problems compared to children who have a permanent home, and

4 WHEREAS High mobility, poverty, and other family stresses associated with homelessness create unique educational barriers that negatively impact learning, and

5 WHEREAS The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires schools to remove any barriers that limit the ability of a student experiencing homelessness to enroll, attend, and succeed in school; however, funding allocations have not increased at rates that correspond to the growing need, now therefore be it

RESOLVED That Florida PTA and its constituent associations educate their communities about of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act which is designed to aid in the education of homeless children by providing comprehensive services necessary to guarantee equal educational opportunities; and be it further,

RESOLVED That Florida PTA and its constituent associations urge policymakers to implement and full fund the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provisions in all Florida school districts, and be it further,

RESOLVED That Florida PTA and its constituent associations urge policymakers to establish an ample funding allocation for the Title I-set-aside for Title X, which is a funding source used to support the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

## Background Summary

The number of Florida students who are considered homeless has doubled since 2007 and families with children are the fastest-growing segment of homeless people. Last school year, thousands more children were found living in hotels or shelters or crammed into homes with other families or neighbors.

Homelessness has a devastating effect on a student's mental and physical health, nutritional intake, and academic achievement. High mobility, trauma, and poverty associated with homelessness create unique educational barriers and challenges that permanently housed students may not face.

Homelessness is a multifaceted problem requiring comprehensive solutions. Unfortunately, during a time when the federal government should be increasing funding for homeless programs to keep pace with the increased numbers of homeless children and families, funding for these programs has been held level or cut.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is designed to ensure that children experiencing homelessness have access to the same free, appropriate public education and related services as their permanently housed peers. The Act requires State and Local Educational Agencies to remove any barriers that may limit the ability of a homeless student to enroll, attend and succeed in school. This critical act also emphasizes collaboration with other support service agencies and encourages parent participation as critical to the educational success of homeless students. It's imperative that the policy makers establish adequate funding allocations to support Florida's homeless students in accordance with the McKinney -Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Solutions like these have the potential to significantly improve the academic outcomes of students experiencing homelessness.