



## **House Appropriations Subcommittee on Article III Dedicate State Funding for McKinney-Vento Programs**

February 24, 2025

Dear Chairman Kitzman and the Subcommittee on Article III,

In the 2023-24 school year, 121,537 Texas students were identified as experiencing homelessness, an increase from 114,594 students the school year prior. More than 15,000 students each year experience homelessness without a parent or guardian.<sup>1</sup> These students face unique challenges that make it hard for them to succeed in school and other extracurricular activities. Recognizing that homeless youth face unique obstacles, the United States Congress passed, and has reaffirmed several times, the federal McKinney-Vento Act. The Act supports students experiencing homelessness in many ways, such as ensuring schools provide them with transportation to and from school, requiring school districts to remove enrollment barriers, and allowing them to stay in their school of origin even should they have to move due to their homelessness. The Act also establishes a McKinney-Vento liaison in every school district.

McKinney-Vento liaisons are lifelines for youth experiencing homelessness. Liaisons are the leading professionals in their district tasked with identifying students who qualify for McKinney-Vento services. Once a student is identified, liaisons are responsible for coordinating a myriad of services for them, getting them necessary supplies, educating administrators in schools throughout their district on the McKinney-Vento Act, tracking and organizing data, applying for grants, and countless other tasks to support homeless students. Often, McKinney-Vento liaisons juggle all these responsibilities while working

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Education Agency, Texas Education for Homeless Children & Youth Infographic, (2025) available at <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/2024-tehcy-infographic-23-24.pdf>. Note, this is likely an undercount as many youth experiencing homelessness are difficult to identify for a number of reasons. Using estimates from Chapin-Hall, Texas Appleseed has calculated that there are around 360,000 youth between the ages of 13-25 who are experiencing homelessness in a given year in Texas. Their research is available at [https://www.chapinhall.org/news/one-in-10-young-adults-experience-homelessness-during-one-year/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiAg-u9BhCjARIsANLj-s2o9cTAC6LXicoUyYqKKyDeLK4FSrAfg\\_L9QkUvIm-oYHOTOBCyensaAhEYEALw\\_wcB](https://www.chapinhall.org/news/one-in-10-young-adults-experience-homelessness-during-one-year/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiAg-u9BhCjARIsANLj-s2o9cTAC6LXicoUyYqKKyDeLK4FSrAfg_L9QkUvIm-oYHOTOBCyensaAhEYEALw_wcB)



as a school counselor or registrar since many have other positions within their school district.

Although liaisons are instrumental in reducing truancy rates among homeless students and increasing their success in school and beyond, McKinney-Vento liaisons struggle to find the funds to adequately help their students. This is because **Texas does not allocate any state dollars to help McKinney-Vento programs**. This lack of funding options forces liaisons to rely on Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY) grants, which are pass-through federal funds that they must compete to receive.

During the 2024-25 school year, there was only \$9,393,990 in TEHCY grants to support students experiencing homelessness.<sup>2</sup> This is a devastating shortfall from the previous three years when liaisons were supported by an additional \$80 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).<sup>3</sup> With these additional funds, many liaisons were able to use them in combination with traditional TEHCY grants to develop innovative programs and services to give students experiencing homelessness the best opportunity to succeed in school. Some examples include:

- Hiring staff focused on:
  - connecting youth to **mental health supports**
  - **mitigating and addressing truancy** incidents by working with the student and their family
  - **individual case management** for students and their families
- Paying senior **fees for graduation**, including caps and gowns
- **Advanced placement testing fees** for students trying to earn college credit
- **Math and reading program packets** to keep students engaged over the summer and Christmas breaks
- **Tutoring services** to support youth who need additional attention
- **Basic necessities** for school, such as clothes, supplies, hygiene products, and more

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<sup>2</sup> Texas Education Agency, Program Guidelines 2024–2025 Texas Education For Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY), (2025) available at

<https://tea4avcastro.tea.state.tx.us/eGrants/24-25/25460005/proguider3.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Texas Education Agency, Federal & State Monthly Drawdown Interactive Dashboards, (current as of 2/1/25) available at <https://tea4avcastro.tea.state.tx.us/ffcr/grantsawards.html>



- **Conference fees** that support liaisons' professional development and subject matter expertise

Although these initiatives have positively impacted students experiencing homelessness, many of these services have, or will soon be, discontinued.

**Texas cannot continue to allow McKinney-Vento programming to go underfunded.**

We need to dedicate state funds to support McKinney-Vento liaisons and ensure that these key programs can persist without ARPA funding. **Texas should allocate \$80 million to McKinney-Vento programs to match the funding liaisons received from ARPA grants and ensure that students experiencing homelessness have the resources necessary to succeed in school.** Not only will this help our most vulnerable students and overworked school professionals, but by dedicating state education dollars to McKinney-Vento programming, we will be making an unprecedented investment in ensuring the cycle of homelessness ends.

To capture how vital these services are for youth, we have attached a story from a former McKinney-Vento student who is passionate about ensuring that this program is meaningfully supported.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Martin Martinez  
Senior Policy Analyst, Texas Appleseed  
[mmartinez@texasappleseed.org](mailto:mmartinez@texasappleseed.org)

Brett Merfish  
Director of Youth Justice, Texas Appleseed  
[bmerfish@texasappleseed.org](mailto:bmerfish@texasappleseed.org)

Lauren Rose  
Director of Public Policy, TNOYS  
[lrose@tnoys.org](mailto:lrose@tnoys.org)



Hi, My name is Rainadine Leom and I would not be where I am today without the McKinney Vento program. When I was in highschool, Norma Mercado, a McKinney Vento liaison, found out that I was a self supporting youth. She helped me file an independent FAFSA, took me to the doctor and dentist when I needed to go, and assisted me in paying dues for various after school programs I was involved in. She even drove me to and from club meetings. Because of all the support I was able to receive from the program, I was able to build a solid resume for my college applications. I went on to get a full ride scholarship, and now have a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Texas State University. The help I received from the McKinney Vento funding extended beyond my high school career and helped me all throughout my college experience as well. It helped with groceries during covid, doctors appointments, leadership development conferences, and provided the intangible benefit of simply knowing I had someone in my corner supporting me. I used to feel jealous that other people's parents would support them while mine did not. The McKinney Vento program made it feel like I was not so different after all.

I think it's very important that Texas funds McKinney-Vento programs to make sure it remains available for generations to come. It is so much harder to change your circumstances if you never have anyone believe in you. McKinny Vento is a lifesaving program that tells homeless youth that they *can* achieve their dreams and make a better future for themselves.

- Rainadine Leom, [rainadineleom@gmail.com](mailto:rainadineleom@gmail.com)