

**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES – HOMELESS SERVICES PROGRAM**  
**COUNCIL BILL 15-0275R**  
**'THERE'S A BETTER WAY' PROGRAM**  
COUNCIL REPORT DECEMBER 14, 2015

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The Homeless Services Program (HSP) manages, administers and coordinates federal, state and local funds to provide services for individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. The City, through HSP, contracts with service providers to provide shelter, housing and support services to the homeless population. As the Continuum of Care lead for federal Housing and Urban Development funds, HSP coordinates all mandated and supplemental activities addressing homelessness in the City.

On any given night in Baltimore, nearly 3,000 people are experiencing homeless in the City. Our most recent Point-in-Time Count showed that on a single night in January 2015, Baltimore City had more than 2,400 people who were staying in temporary shelter and additionally 340 people staying outdoors. This is widely recognized as an undercount, as persons in hidden places, especially abandoned buildings, are difficult to locate and persons staying with friends or family are excluded from the count.

New Mexico's program to assist individuals with supportive services and job opportunities to reduce panhandling, called "There's a Better Way", touches on concerns we have here in Baltimore. Offering employment opportunities is critical to helping persons afford housing. At this time, a pilot program of this type could have an impact in Baltimore City with the following clearly identified:

**Increase in income for individuals that panhandle**

This can be achieved and improve quality of life however it is likely that minimum wage jobs would be the main source of income. A focus on employment opportunities and skills needed would be important to guide efforts and determine the cost of housing that could be sustained.

**Increase access to supportive services and shelter**

Individuals can be incentivized to use services and shelter as a participation requirement of this employment program. The majority of homeless individuals on the street are aware of services and resources when approached by outreach workers and additionally shelters are frequently at capacity.

**Increase permanent housing placements**

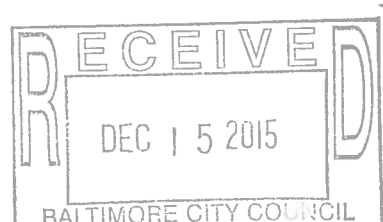
The employment opportunities of this program could create viable income for individuals to sustain housing however availability of housing options at much lower rents is scarce. Congregate living may be the only option and also difficult to find.

**Reduction in panhandling**

Individuals may earn more income with other employment opportunities and choose not to panhandle. It should be assessed whether individuals that panhandle have accessed job placement programs that currently exist and what measures or systems, if any, will be in place to prevent or quickly address new individuals that may panhandle.

**Reduction in the number of individuals who are homeless**

Individuals can increase their income to levels that would allow them to afford housing and this would reduce homeless. However, it would occur over time in small increments and a reduction may not be immediately noticeable.



Comments

**Recommendation:**

Given the potential opportunities and significant challenges identified above MOHS-HSP recommends that we monitor the impact of the program in Albuquerque once it is past its preliminary implementation phase and then determine if there can be a measurable impact on these goal areas for Baltimore City.