

# Sen. Darling: Bills to combat homelessness clear Senate

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**Contact:** Sen. Alberta Darling  
[1-608-266-5830](tel:1-608-266-5830)

Madison, Wisconsin – As Wisconsin’s weather gets colder, efforts to help the homeless are headed to Governor Walker’s desk. On Tuesday, the Wisconsin State Senate approved two bills to help people get off the streets and on the pathway to success. Senator Darling says the bills will focus on collaboration to end homelessness.

“These bills provide real help and real hope to the homeless,” Darling said, “They will streamline and improve policies by enabling agencies to work together to effectively provide services to our citizens.”

In 2015, more than 27,500 people received services or shelter for being homeless in our state. Wisconsin has departments in eight state agencies and four federally designated Continuums of Care to fight homelessness, but no way for them to collaborate and make sure money is spent wisely. One bill passed on Tuesday will create a council to review and update statewide policies to better coordinate help for the homeless.

Nearly 5,000 people are on a waiting list for federal housing vouchers in our state. The average wait time for the voucher is around five years. The second bill approved will prioritize chronically homeless families for the voucher.

“This will ensure money is spent wisely and families can access the services that best suit their needs,” Darling said, “The sooner we are able to get people off the streets and into a home, the sooner they can become productive members of society.”

Darling’s bills build on efforts to end homelessness in the state budget. The two-year budget plan included a provision to give the Department of Administration more flexibility in administering housing grants. It also creates the “Better Way”

Initiative based on the program of the same name in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The initiative creates a grant program to move homeless citizens to permanent jobs

Senator Darling represents portions of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha Counties.

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