

Rep: Allen: Lauds passage of homelessness bills

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Representative Scott Allen (R-Waukesha) supported the passage of a package of bills targeting homelessness.

“There are many committed volunteers and contributors in communities across the state who work diligently to assist those who are homeless,” said Rep. Allen. “Hopefully these bills will provide a shot in the arm to encourage and bolster their efforts.”

The series of bills mirrored the recommendations of the Interagency Council on Homelessness and integrated new approaches in combatting unique issues facing communities.

AB 119 expands the State Shelter Subsidy Grant (SSSG) by 50%. Communities which receive the grants can expand existing facilities, or remodel existing buildings into shelters. The bill also adds performance metrics to incentivize the transition of individuals into permanent housing.

AB 120 permits shelter facilities to use additional funding to train case managers. The Interagency Council on Homelessness found well-trained case managers are linked to improved housing outcomes, health, and decreased drug and alcohol abuse.

AB 121 creates a Housing Navigation Grant for agencies to work with landlords in finding and maintaining permanent housing for homeless individuals. Agencies would also be able to assist in the mediation of disputes and work with case managers to provide housing.

AB 122 would integrate an advocate from a local homelessness response system on

workforce development boards, and encourage the inclusion of homeless individuals when developing strategic workforce plans.

AB 123 tripled the funding for the Housing Assistance Program (HAP), the most flexible funding source for homelessness funding. HAP is used for a variety of needs, including mirroring of the “Housing First” model.

AB 124 increased funding available for the homelessness prevention program. Funds are used to provide short-term housing solutions, rather than providing space in a shelter. Grants and loans will be provided throughout Wisconsin.

AB 125 creates a forgivable loan program to expand the availability of affordable housing stock. Affordable housing is required to meet inspection standards, and financial barriers sometimes prevent landlords from renovating units to meet those standards. Loans may be forgiven if the unit is rented as low-income housing for a certain period of time.

Funding for each of these bills is linked to the state budget. The bills now go to the Senate.