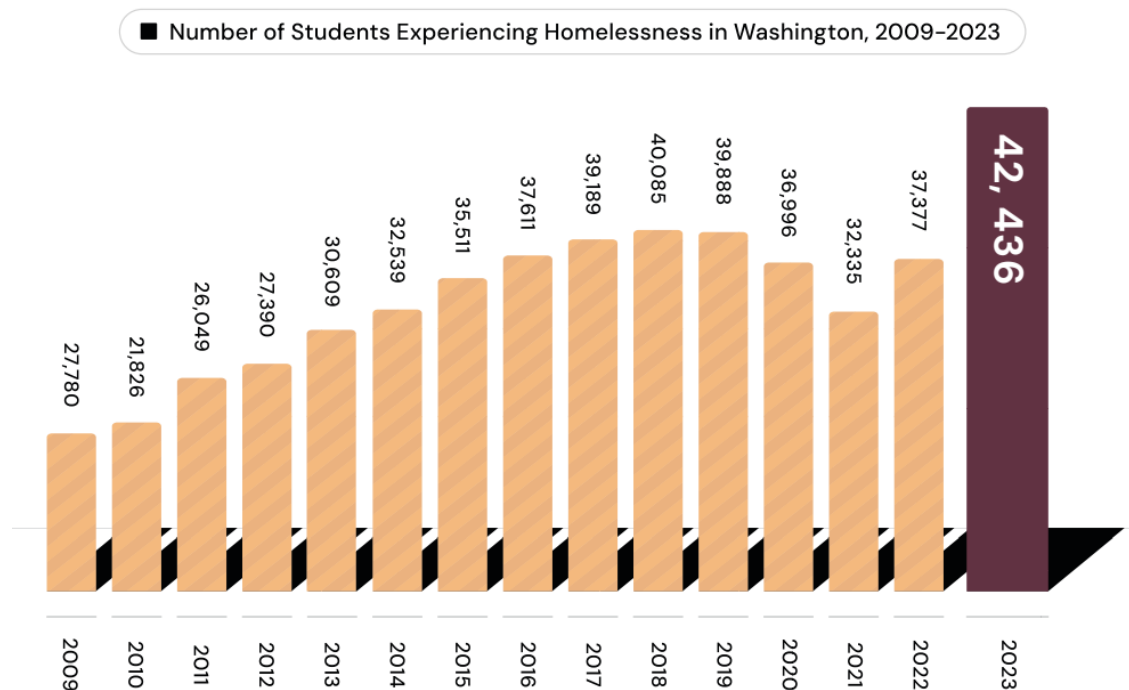


In order for students to be ready for learning, their basic physical, social, and emotional needs must be met. When these needs go unmet, students can struggle to stay engaged in school or even regularly attend school. This is especially true for students experiencing homelessness, who often don't know where they will sleep week-to-week or if they will have access to enough food to sustain their nutritional needs.

Outside of the years of the pandemic, the number of Washington students experiencing homelessness has seen steady increases since the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction began monitoring the number annually.<sup>1</sup>



As the resources needed to support the increased needs of students experiencing homelessness have grown in recent years, state and federal supports have become increasingly uncertain.

In 2025, federal-level decisions have introduced significant uncertainty for programs supporting students experiencing homelessness:

<sup>1</sup> [https://buildingchanges.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2016-2023\\_K-12\\_OutcomesReport\\_ExecSummary.pdf](https://buildingchanges.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2016-2023_K-12_OutcomesReport_ExecSummary.pdf)

- **Proposed Elimination of Funding Supporting Homeless Students:** A White House proposal sought to consolidate the McKinney-Vento Act’s Education for Children and Homeless Youth (ECHY) program into a block grant, effectively removing dedicated funding. ECHY is the only federal program focused on identifying homeless students and removing barriers to education.
- **Administrative Disruptions:** In October, the U.S. Department of Education terminated staff responsible for ECHY oversight, including compliance and guideline enforcement. These positions were reinstated only after a successful legal challenge.
- **Shift of Oversight to Department of Labor:** On November 18, the Department of Education began transferring responsibilities—including ECHY administration—to the Department of Labor, signaling a retreat from the federal government’s longstanding role in ensuring educational access for homeless students.

The federal level uncertainty has been compounded by challenges at the state level. During the 2025 legislative session [the Homeless Student Stability Education Program \(HSSeP\)](#), which is designed to support districts with identification, enrollment, and services for public school students living in homeless situations, had its funding cut by 76% to \$1.2 million for the current two-year budget cycle.

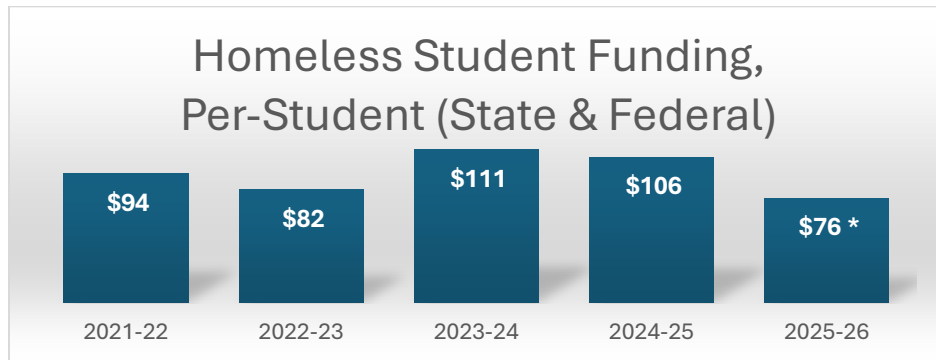
#### **Federal & State Funding for Students Experiencing Homelessness** (Millions)

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
<b>Federal Funding (ECHY)<sup>2</sup></b>	\$1.7	\$1.7	\$2.1	\$2.1	\$2.1
<b>State Funding (HSSeP)<sup>3</sup></b>	\$1.2	\$1.2	\$2.5	\$2.5	<b>\$1.2</b>
<b>Total District Funding</b>	\$2.9	\$2.9	\$4.6	\$4.6	\$3.3

With funding cuts and increasing homelessness, the statewide average per-student allocation for homeless students has dropped consistently over the past several years.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-overview/annual-performance-reports/budget/budget-tables/fiscal-year-2023-fy-2025-presidents-budget-state-tables-us-department-of-education>

<sup>3</sup> [2025-27 Enacted Budgets - Office of Financial Management](#)



\*Assumes no change in the number of students experiencing homelessness from 2024-25

The budget crisis is compounding the difficulties districts face in serving homeless students. With state funding slashed, federal support eliminated, and homelessness on the rise, schools are struggling to maintain the resources needed to guarantee every child's right to learn.

Now more than ever, we need to invest in what works. HSSeP's approach—linking housing stability and academic achievement—has delivered results since the pandemic. For a child to learn, they must first feel secure in where they will sleep each night. In 2024, HSSeP strengthened the lives of more than **13,000** people by providing housing stability and increasing access to learning. State budget cuts in 2025 reduced funding so significantly that the number of people supported through HSSeP will be less than a third of that for the 25-26 school year. It is clear that restoring this vital funding is a critical step towards supporting our most vulnerable students.

This session represents a critical chance to defend homeless students. Together, from Washington, D.C. to Olympia, we must advocate for the programs that guarantee educational access for every child.

