

NEWS

HUD homelessness report 'just the tip of the iceberg,' housing advocate says

Posted Dec 21, 2018

6

Gallery: Ending homelessness

Comment

0
sharesBy [Diane Lederman | dlederman@repub.com](#)

SPRINGFIELD - The 552,830 people that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development said are experiencing homelessness is "just the tip of the iceberg," said Kelly Turley, associate director for the Boston-based [Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless](#).

"The numbers don't begin to reflect the reality," Turley said.

Every January, HUD does a point-in-time housing count to assess the homeless population across the country. But, Turley said, "the definition is pretty narrow."

Homelessness up slightly nationally, Massachusetts sees the largest hike

The counts are based on people staying in sheltered locations -- emergency shelters or transitional housing programs -- or in unsheltered locations such as on the street, in abandoned buildings or in other places not suitable for human habitation, according to the report.

Turley said the number is based on who counters actually see, not the people hidden from view or those sleeping on friends' or relatives' couches on the night of the count.

And the report was missing data from San Francisco, Portland, Oregon, and California's Orange County.

In Massachusetts, 20,068 people were reported homeless -- a 14.2 percent hike from 2017. That's the largest increase in the country, according to the report, but much of the increase can be attributed to the high number of people displaced by disasters seeking refuge in Massachusetts.

Ending homelessness in 10 years was an ambitious goal; with people still homeless, advocates turn to new approaches

Still, Turley believes Massachusetts' numbers are low, particularly when it comes to counting those 18 to 24 who are hard to count because they don't want to be found. She said the number is larger than the 465 reported for that age group. With more funding to target homeless youth, she expects a better count in January.

