



Assembly District 15 Candidate Questionnaire

EBHO is a member-driven organization working to preserve, protect, and create affordable housing opportunities for low-income communities in the East Bay by educating, advocating, organizing, and building coalitions.

- 1. Do you believe that housing is a human right? If not, why not? If so, what are you going to do ensure every one of your constituents has a safe, quality place to call home?**

Yes-- I believe that housing is a human right, and that the greatest threat to our prosperity, diversity and equity in the Bay Area is the skyrocketing cost of housing. Neighborhoods with access to good schools and public transportation are now out of reach even for middle-income families. Our housing crisis is part and parcel of our broader struggle with growing wealth inequality — California has the highest concentration of billionaires and millionaires, while at the same time 40% of population is living at or near the poverty line. Housing is a fundamental human need and our current status quo is simply not meeting that need.

As the next Assemblymember for District 15, I would fight for progressive and practical solutions that focus on creating homes for everyone who wants to be a part of our community, and protecting existing tenants from unfair evictions or rent spikes. I firmly believe that we can achieve sensible policies that create housing, strengthen our neighborhoods, and help the Bay Area live up to its values of welcoming newcomers and sharing prosperity. At the end of the day, I believe we need to build more housing at all income levels - that means advancing policies that increase funding for more affordable housing, reduce development costs, streamline permitting processes, reform land use rules, and unlock public land. See questions below and my [housing platform](#) for more details on my policy ideas.

- 2. Most people agree that California is experience a critical housing crisis with increasing affordability problems for very low, low and even moderate-income households. But there is much disagreement about how best to solve the crisis. Some people argue that the best way to solve the affordability crisis is to just build much more market-rate housing by eliminating local zoning and land use barriers and providing for development “by right” with no local discretionary approvals. Others argue that the affordable housing crisis – especially for those with more limited incomes – can only be addressed with a 3-prong approach of tenant protection, preservation of existing housing that is currently affordable, and producing new housing with affordability conditions. What is your own approach to solving the state’s housing crisis, and what measures would you prioritize?**

I support an “all-of-the-above” approach to tackling our housing crisis. As Assemblywoman, I would champion three approaches, similar to the “3 P’s” above, to address our crisis in the region: first, build more homes for low-income and middle-income families more quickly; second, protect existing tenants from displacement, especially seniors and people with disabilities; and third, grow in a smart way by



building more homes in walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods.

In addition, we should consider creating the California Public Infrastructure Bank, devoted to financing more affordable housing. We also need more homes for our teachers, nurses, non-profit workers and other middle-income folks. To this end, we should create workforce housing and reclaim public lands like parking lots for housing. We should also support alternative ways to promote more housing like incentivizing limited equity housing cooperatives and accessory dwelling units. Building more homes at all income levels — low income and market rate — will ease the pressure cooker nature of our market and get Bay Area people into the homes they need.

3. Do you support changes to SB 35 that would lower the affordability threshold for streamlined projects in areas that are already meeting their Housing Element targets for market rate housing?

I supported the passage of SB35 which streamlines the process of infill housing development for cities that are not keeping up with housing demand. Recent reports show that almost 28% of cities and counties met their market-rate housing goals but not their below market rate goals, so these areas can now streamline building processes for housing development projects with at least 50% affordable housing units. Because this represents over ¼ of all California cities and counties that are struggling to build these types of developments, we should do further studies to identify if the true cost of building these units with 50% affordable units is truly prohibitively high, in which case we may need to lower affordability thresholds slightly for streamlining-eligible projects. But we should be cautious before making any changes to SB35 -- the goal for these cities needs to be creating as much affordable housing as possible, as quickly as possible. Any changes to SB35 that lower affordability requirements should be carefully analyzed and only approved if they will result in more affordable units overall being built.

4. What's your position on State legislation (such as SB 827) that would mandate that cities enact zoning that would permit greater density and height in TOD areas? What conditions (such as affordability, protection of existing affordable housing, and tenant protections) would need to be included for you to support such measures?

I support legislation that promotes housing density near public transportation while preserving affordability. I think it has the potential to not only address our housing crisis, but also maximize investments in transit and allow the state to achieve our environmental goals. Our housing crisis demands urgent action and bold leadership, and I think proposals like SB 827 are important and merit healthy debate and serious consideration.

We must make sure that any such legislation has strong tenant protections and includes measures to mandate that new developments include significant percentages of affordable housing. I was glad to see important protections for existing tenants included in amendments to SB 827, such as adding affordability requirements to nearly all approved projects, and ensuring no net loss of affordable units. It is critical that we include these type of strong tenant protections in our housing bills to protect current residents against displacement as we increase our housing stock.



5. What new sources of funding would you consider to create an ongoing stream of dedicated funding for affordable housing production?

Prop 13 impacts the housing crisis by creating a disincentive for people to move within the community. Homeowners who would otherwise relocate locally or downsize can't afford to lose their property tax rates, and it stagnates the overall housing market. I strongly support Prop 13 reform, requiring commercial properties (with a small business carve out) to pay property taxes at their market rate. Doing so will generate an additional \$11.4 billions in revenue which can be used to finance more affordable housing, as well as investments in local schools, roads, and other public services.

Other ideas to fund more affordable housing include having a California State Infrastructure Bank to fund affordable housing and purchase housing stock during economic downturns that can be converted to affordable units. I strongly supported Alameda County Measure A1, and strongly support Proposition 1. In future years, I think we need to consider other similar bonds to bring new revenue into our state for affordable housing production. I also supported David Chiu's bill to end tax breaks for second homes mortgage deduction and instead apply those funds to affordable housing, and would be interested in other creative ways to fund affordable housing.

6. What do you feel are the greatest barriers to affordable housing development in Assembly District 15, and how would you remove those barriers?

I think the cause of our housing crisis stems from an inability to build enough housing at every income level to keep up with our economic and population growth, combined with a legacy of persistent and systemic racial discrimination in our housing policy that has resulted in continued and disproportionate impacts against communities of color.

Forcing people from all walks of life to move further and further away from their jobs and spend hours on the road commuting is not a Bay Area or progressive value. Our severe housing shortage is pushing away the very people that give our communities their strength, vitality, and character. Teachers, first responders, restaurant workers, seniors, artists, and activists find themselves increasingly excluded from the Bay Area's thriving urban centers, disproportionately impacting communities of color.

Bay Area cities that refuse to build enough housing for the people who work there do real harm to individual and public health, to our environment, and most of all, to the people who are left homeless by the housing shortage. As I work to address California's housing crisis, I will never forget there are people for whom our decisions can mean the difference between being housed and being on street. If elected, I will fight to build the political will and legislation needed to get more housing built, and to do it quickly--and I believe that we should focus on transit-based housing development to make this happen.

To respond to this crisis and build more affordable housing, California does have a role to play in regulating local zoning. Some communities are simply not living up to their responsibility to create enough housing--especially affordable housing--for everyone, or have engaged in exclusionary zoning



that disproportionately impacts communities of color. These actions have exacerbated our housing crisis.

I would support the best percentage of affordable units in new developments that yields the highest number of units overall built in aggregate, and I would also explore implementing tax breaks and other measures to increase those percentages while still making it worthwhile for more homes to be built.

7. Will you support another attempt to pass State legislation to exempt Oakland from the Ellis Act with respect to SROs, as is already the case for SF, San Jose, LA and San Diego?

Yes -- I would support a bill like AB423 that prevents low-income Oakland residents from being unfairly displaced under the Ellis Act. I support increasing tenant protections and believe we should repeal or reform the Ellis Act statewide to close loopholes and ensure that it cannot enable landlords to unfairly evict tenants. We also must take other action to increase tenant protections, such as significantly increasing and expanding the Renters Tax Credit (RTC) and setting rates based on metro area. The RTC is currently only \$60 per person or \$120 for a family. Homeowners get the financial benefit of deducting their mortgage interest. Renters need relief too. This work is being pushed at the federal level by Kamala Harris, and we as Californians should push similar efforts at the state level as well. Putting real money into the pockets of our renters can go along way to helping those out who are \$700 away from falling over a precipice and spiraling into poverty.

8. What changes would you support to strengthen the State's Surplus Land Act?

I supported AB2135, which was passed several years ago to facilitate more affordable housing development in California by amending the CA Surplus Land Act. The bill created more incentives and regulations for local agencies to sell or lease surplus public land to affordable housing developers, including extending the negotiation period between developers and agencies, setting a affordable unit minimum of 25% for all affordable housing developers bidding for the land, and directly recognizing the connection between affordable housing and transportation use. We can further strengthen this Act by creating more community input in the negotiations process, and creating more explicit incentives and regulations to promote transit-based housing-- thus allowing us to use surplus land to grow in a smart and environmentally-sustainable way. We may also want to explore raising the minimum affordable housing units required in any proposed development projects, if it will result in more affordable housing and more housing overall built on our surplus public land.

9. Do you support Proposition 10, which would repeal the Costa-Hawkins Act? Why or why not?

I strongly support reforms of Costa-Hawkins to ensure that tenants are not unfairly evicted or priced out of their homes. But I do not support Proposition 10 because I share the concerns raised by the NAACP, the Building and Constructions Trade Unions and affordable housing experts that a full repeal of Costa Hawkins could lead to unintended consequences: a slowing or all-out stopping of any new home construction or incentivizing developers to build condos instead of rental units. This would thereby



exacerbate our housing crisis, and making affordable rental housing even harder for those who need it to find.

One potential fix that could be implemented through Costa-Hawkins reform would include a rolling date for buildings to come under local rent stabilization laws, as opposed to the 1995 fixed date. This would ensure new housing can be financed and built to support community needs while still empowering local municipalities to implement appropriate rent stabilization measures. This should be done in tandem with implementing anti-gouging measures that prevent profit-driven landlords from unfairly raising rents above a certain cap.

10. What measures will you support to prevent at risk households from becoming homeless, and what would you do to provide housing for those who are already homeless? Please discuss both short-term and long-term strategies.

We are in the middle of an unconscionable homeless crisis--over 130,000 Californians currently are living in shelters or on the streets. This is a problem for all of us, and we must all be part of the solution. Our homelessness crisis is a direct symptom of our housing shortages, inadequate social safety net, mass incarceration policies, holes in our health care and education systems, and structural racism.

The best and most just solution to our homeless crisis is to prevent people from becoming unhoused in the first place. To do this, we must invest further in our social safety net, and put better mechanisms in place in our schools, hospitals, jails, and community hubs to identify and reach out to those at risk of losing their homes. The resources we spend here on our students, friends, and neighbors will help keep our community members housed, and will save us money in the long-run.

This means we need to bolster our public programs that give low-income people access to fresh food, rent assistance, quality health care, higher education, and job training. We should make these services more accessible especially for people who are formerly incarcerated, disabled, veterans, or foster youth, as these groups experience highest rates of homelessness.

We also need more nurses and counselors in schools who can identify students with physical or mental stress or illness around their family's housing situations, and connect them with these public supports. Without these resources, our students too often slip through the cracks-- more than 200,000 of California's students reported being homeless at some point in the 2016-2017 school year.

Finally, we need to significantly expand tenant protections so that people are not unjustly or unexpectedly displaced from their homes by profit-driven landlords. In the East Bay where more and more of our community members live in constant fear of eviction, I support bolstering our just cause eviction laws, reforming Costa-Hawkins, increasing and expanding the Renters Tax Credit (RTC), and guaranteeing legal services for anyone facing unfair eviction.

For those who are already experiencing homelessness, we need to improve our whole-care system--this starts with improving our outreach services. We need more trained staff who can connect with people experiencing homelessness- especially those who are not currently accessing public services- and



East Bay Housing Organizations

understand their unique situation and needs. Outreach teams can also do important work to communicate with the general public and change negative stigmas around homelessness.

We must also make sure that our emergency shelters, which are critical resources to immediately support our unhoused neighbors, are structured and run in a way that is compassionate and culturally competent. All our shelters and navigation centers should be low-barrier--that means clean, welcoming of partners and pets, and equipped with on-site access to social services that homeless people rely on.

In the long-term, we need to increase our use of flexible fund programs like rapid-rehousing and interim housing models that enable local governments and community-based organizations to provide client-specific support. These supports include housing search assistance, time-limited housing subsidies, and wraparound services ranging from transportation and child care to mental health services and addiction treatment. Research shows that these programs can be cheaper and significantly more effective than traditional shelters in helping people end homelessness-- especially for women and children.

For the chronically homeless in our communities--who have experienced homelessness for at least a year and who have a disability-- we need to continue to provide permanent supportive housing, with ongoing subsidies and wraparound services, long after they have found housing.

Implementing all these programs well means that we need to allocate far more funding to solving homelessness, and be smart about how we use each dollar. We have strong federal funding sources through the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Medical Mental Health Funding, as well as Prop 63 money statewide. But our skyrocketing rates of homelessness means we need increased funding, plain and simple. And to make each dollar count the most, we have to better streamline services so that each support provider, whether it's an agency or community-based organization, has access to the subsidies and flexible funds they need to make sure every person experiencing homelessness in California finds their way back to a permanent home.