



March 26, 2021

The Honorable Luz Rivas
California State Assembly
State Capitol, P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0039

RE: AB 71 (Rivas) – Homelessness Funding: Bring California Home Act – SUPPORT AS AMENDED

Dear Assemblymember Rivas,

East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO) is pleased to support AB 71, which, for the first time in history, commits the Legislature to a comprehensive plan to address homelessness by creating ongoing, dedicated state investment in long-term solutions to homelessness.

EBHO is a non-profit, member-driven organization with over 300 organizational and individual members. For 35 years, we have worked to preserve, protect, and create affordable housing opportunities for low-income communities in the East Bay by educating, advocating, organizing, and building coalitions. We believe that solutions to California's severe housing crisis must be comprehensive. As such, we support a multi-pronged effort based on the three principles of production of new housing, preservation of existing housing that is affordable, and protection of residents from unaffordable rent increases, eviction, displacement, and homelessness.

California leads the nation in total number of people experiencing homelessness, with one in four Americans experiencing homelessness residing in California. In January 2019, an estimated 151,278 people experienced homelessness in California at a single point in time, a 17% increase over the previous year. African American, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ communities unjustly bear the brunt of these trends. For example, African Americans, who represent only about 6.5% of Californians, account for nearly 40% of the state's homeless population. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened our existing homelessness crisis by putting hundreds of thousands of Californians into financial distress, and either on the brink of or experiencing homelessness. It has also endangered the health and wellbeing of those experiencing homelessness, and depleted local resources. Therefore, it is critical that we develop urgent and innovative solutions to address the homelessness crisis.

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March 26, 2021

Page 2

AB 71 establishes a permanent source of funding and collaborative statewide strategy for solving homelessness. It will fill gaps within the state's response and scale evidence-based solutions, while promoting innovations to move people more quickly into permanent housing. AB 71 also aims to eliminate racial bias, ensure youth and survivors of domestic violence have equitable access to housing and services, and enhance coordination and collaboration among state and local agencies. The bill ensures a transparent and accountable process through performance measures, rewards local governments for hitting aggressive goals, and removes funding for any jurisdiction failing to spend resources quickly. It requires annual reporting and strengthens data collection at the local and state levels. In transforming the state's response to homelessness, it will bring more transparency to the state's approach to homelessness. AB 71 relies on funding from large and multinational corporations for the revenue source, rebalancing inequities laid bare by COVID.

We are committed to ensuring homelessness becomes brief, rare, and nonrecurrent. Ongoing state investments—combined with significant structural changes to how California oversees, coordinates, and delivers results—are essential to solving homelessness. We thank you for introducing this bill and look forward to working to secure its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey Levin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Jeffrey Levin
Policy Director