Dear Councilmembers,

I am writing on behalf of East Bay Housing Organizations, a member-based organization committed to ensuring all low-income people in the East Bay have an affordable home. The Wellness Center planned for McKay Ave. in Alameda is critically needed to provide supportive housing for formerly unhoused Seniors and care for unhoused people, who experience profoundly unequal health disparities.

The number of people who are experiencing homelessness in the East Bay continues to rise; in Alameda County, Black elders are living in tents, vehicles, and shelter facilities at much higher rates than elders of other races and it’s unacceptable, a crisis the Wellness Center can help resolve. Continuing progress in creating the Wellness Center is a critical issue of racial equity and basic compassion for people who have spent their lives contributing to their communities. Attempts to stall the Wellness Center, such as this agenda item contesting the Historical Advisory Board’s decision, obstruct the city’s progress in enacting racial equity and reducing the number of people living in our streets.

The HAB’s decision to retain the historical designation of the site, which can be reflected in the new project itself, has precedent in other affordable homes in the East Bay, such as Hana Gardens in El Cerrito, which shares the history of Japanese communities in the neighborhood – both the Japanese Flower District that once flourished in the neighborhood and terrible history of Internment.

Please, let the decision and the hard work of the HAB members stand on their merits, and let the Wellness Center be constructed as soon as possible. Lives of low-income elders depend on it.

Sincerely,

Grover Wehman-Brown

Communications Manager, East Bay Housing Organizations