



East Bay Housing Organizations

March 14, 2022

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair of the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1816 (Bryan) Reentry Housing and Workforce Development Grant Program – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

On behalf of East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO), I am writing in support of AB 1816 (Bryan).

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.

Homelessness and incarceration are inherently linked. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has estimated about 20% of people discharged from prison each year experience homelessness. In fact, people on parole are about 10 times more likely to experience homelessness than the public and have great difficulties accessing housing and employment. They are seven times more likely to recidivate when homeless than when housed, perpetuating a cycle of incarceration and homelessness. Discrimination in our justice system and housing markets have created criminal record barriers that further inequities among those experiencing homelessness, contributing to the high rates of homelessness among African American people, who are almost seven times more likely to be homeless than the general population.

Providing people experiencing homelessness who have recently been incarcerated in prison with a stable, affordable place to live that does not limit length of stay, along with services that promote housing stability and employment, is proven to reduce recidivism. Formerly incarcerated, formerly homeless tenants are able to decrease their days incarcerated by over 60% and reduce rates of recidivism by 40-60%, compared to those who remain homeless. Formerly incarcerated people are far more likely to access treatment for serious mental illness and substance use disorders when housed than homeless and are far more likely to increase their income and access gainful employment.

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While our laudable criminal justice reform efforts are leading to prison population decline and prison closures, California's housing crisis is forcing many returning residents into homelessness. As such, now is the time for our state to invest in ending homelessness among formerly incarcerated people. AB 1816 is aligned with a budget request for the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to provide county grants for rental assistance and services for formerly imprisoned people experiencing homelessness. AB 1816 will break down silos between our homeless response and reentry systems, provide evidence-based approaches to address homelessness over the long-term and reduce recidivism, all within our current budget.

We strongly support this innovative legislation and urge your aye vote.

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

cc: Lisa Engel, Assembly Committee on Housing & Community Development,
lisa.engel@asm.ca.gov