SUMMARY
AB 362 will improve the conditions of shelters by requiring that recipients of certain shelter funding grants comply with health and safety regulations to be eligible for certain state funding and pass-through federal funding.

BACKGROUND
A yearlong investigation by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California (ACLU SoCal) found severe deficits among various emergency shelters, with reports of alleged sexual abuse, overcrowding, unhealthy conditions, and neglect of residents with disabilities and mental illness.

According to the 2019 ACLU SoCal report, many women in these shelters experienced sexual harassment, invasive body searches, and unchecked groping from staff members. The unsanitary conditions include widespread rodent and bedbug infestations, extreme temperatures, broken showers, and toilets. Among these issues, residents trying to hold a job faced many difficulties due to extremely restrictive lock-in/ shut-out policies at the shelters.

Similarly, one of New York’s largest shelter providers exposed multiple sexual abuse accusations against its top executive. The mayor of New York, Bill de Blasio, exemplified how shelter providers, especially those receiving grant funds should be held accountable. The mayor was quick to request an outside auditing firm to review non-profit shelter providers to ensure true compliance. California should follow New York’s example and correct the incidents highlighted in ACLU’s report.

Moreover, prior to Covid-19 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Planning estimated that over 150,000 Californians experienced homelessness on any given day. Now, with the current economic recession and looming statewide evictions, homelessness in our state will continue to rise. Even though shelters were never intended to serve as long-term housing, the reality is until the housing crisis is addressed many of these shelters will serve as the primary residence for unsheltered Californians.

The need for high, enforceable health and safety standards for homeless shelters is urgent, especially considering the vulnerability of homeless shelter residents, many of whom are older adults, people with disabilities, and people with serious health conditions.

SOLUTION
AB 362 would add to existing minimum standards for buildings used for human habitation by specifying minimum health and safety standards for homeless shelters. Shelter operators who fail to meet these standards would become ineligible for state funding and pass-through federal funding.

Loss of Eligibility for State and Pass-Through Federal Funding includes:
- Any substandard homeless shelter that fails to come into compliance with minimum health and safety standards within three months or any homeless shelter with four or more violations of minimum health and safety standards in a year shall become ineligible.

The bill would also require local governments to enforce these standards and would require local enforcement agencies to provide annual reports to the California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency on compliance with minimum standards for all homeless shelters within their jurisdiction.

SUPPORT
American Civil Liberties Union

CONTACT INFORMATION
Michelle Teran
Office of Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva
(916) 319-2065
Michelle.Teran@asm.ca.gov