



June 3, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
 Governor, State of California
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Ralph Diaz
 Secretary, CA Dept. of Corrections & Rehabilitation
 1515 S Street
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins
 State Capitol, Room 205
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
 State Capitol, Room 219
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Holly Mitchell
 Chair, Sen. Committee on Budget
 & Fiscal Review
 State Capitol, Room 5080
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Phil Ting
 Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget
 State Capitol, Room 6026
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Opposition to Proposed Trailer Bill Language on Housing First for Sober Living Homes

Dear Governor Newsom, Senator Atkins, Senator Mitchell, Speaker Rendon, and Assemblymember Ting:

On behalf of the above organizations, which are non-profits working to prevent and solve homelessness, we oppose the proposed trailer bill language amending Section 8256 of the Welfare & Institutions Code (the Housing First law). We urge you to maintain your deep commitment to components critical to the success of Housing First across state programs, particularly for the population facing the greatest barriers to housing stability: people on parole with substance use disorders.

The Legislature passed SB 1380 (Mitchell) in 2016, as Housing First has long been recognized as the only evidence-based solution to homelessness. Housing First prioritizes moving people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing as quickly as possible and using housing as a platform for services.

Since the Housing First model emerged as a promising practice almost 30 years ago, it has been premised on a goal of housing stability. Housing is not contingent on sobriety or participation in a program, and housing stability makes recovery from mental, medical, or substance use conditions possible.

Evidence shows Housing First programs are less expensive and far more effective than treatment first.¹ The national adoption of Housing First resulted in substantial decreases of homelessness nationwide² because tenants in Housing First programs are less likely to return to homelessness than other models, even though Housing First typically serves people with longer histories of homelessness and more complex needs.³ Housing First is linked to substance use decrease, greater access to health care and overall health improvement,⁴ adult and child well-being, food security, income boosts, dramatic reductions in child separations, and decreases in domestic violence.⁵ Most importantly to proposed trailer bill language, it is the only evidence-based model for decreasing recidivism and substance abuse, and for breaking the cycle of homelessness and incarceration.⁶

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a 2015 Policy Brief that clarified that recovery homes—housing offering an environment focused on abstinence from drugs and alcohol—are consistent with Housing First *if true to core components of Housing First*.⁷ Essential to Housing First's success are that, (1) tenants do not lose their housing because they fail to participate in a formal services program, (2) housing and services offer a person-oriented approach that respects client/tenant choice, and (3) tenants are not evicted for use of drugs or alcohol. Particularly because relapse is part of recovery, evicting a tenant because the tenant uses drugs or alcohol is antithetical to both substance use recovery and Housing First. In fact, eviction into homelessness increases risk of both substance use and recidivism.

The trailer bill language would exempt sober living homes funded by the Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation (CDCR) from complying with the core elements of California's Housing First law. Specifically, it would allow CDCR-funded programs to evict tenants if the program staff believe the tenant is not participating adequately in a program or if the tenant relapses. It would further exempt CDCR-funded sober living programs from complying with state landlord-tenant law, meaning a program receiving state funding could evict a tenant without prior notice, without evidence, and without court approval. In essence, these programs could evict a tenant for a symptom (relapse) of a medical condition (a substance use disorder).

Last year, the Legislature provided CDCR, as the only agency funding sober living homes, with an additional year to comply with the core components of Housing First laws it was required to follow. A year later, CDCR is seeking a permanent exemption from Housing First for programs the Department

¹ D. Gubits, M. Shinn, M. Wood, et. al. "Family Options Study: 3-Year Impacts of Housing & Services Interventions for Homeless Families." *Prepared for the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Comm. Dev.* Oct. 2016.

² U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, "The Evidence Behind Approaches That Drive an End to Homelessness." Dec. 2017. https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/evidence-behind-approaches-that-end-homelessness.pdf.

³ D. Gubits, M. Shinn, M. Wood, et. al. "Family Options Study: 3-Year Impacts of Housing & Services Interventions for Homeless Families." *Prepared for the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Comm. Dev.* Oct. 2016. Corporation for Supportive Housing. *Supportive Housing Research FAQs: How Long Do People Stay in Supportive Housing & What Happens When They Leave?* Sept. 2006.

⁴ Sadowski, L., et al. "Effect of a Housing and Case Management Program on Emergency Department Visits and Hospitalizations Among Chronically Homeless Adults." *Journal of American Medical Assoc. (JAMA)*, 301 (17), 1771-1778. 2009. Basu A., et al. "Comparative Cost Analysis of Housing and Case Management Program for Chronically Ill Homeless Adults Compared to Usual Care." *Journal of Health Services Research*. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-6773.2011.01350. 2012.

⁵ D. Gubits, M. Shinn, M. Wood, et. al. "Family Options Study: 3-Year Impacts of Housing & Services Interventions for Homeless Families." *Prepared for the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Comm. Dev.* Oct. 2016.

⁶ J. Somers, S. Rezansoff, et. al. "Housing First Reduces Re-Offending Among Formerly Homeless Adults: Results of a Randomized Control Trial." *Public Library of Science One*. 2013. Sep. 2013.

⁷ U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development. "Recovery Housing Policy Brief." <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Recovery-Housing-Policy-Brief.pdf>. Dec. 2015.

funds. Instead, the undersigned organizations recommend amendments to our Housing First law to clarify that recovery housing following the 2015 HUD Policy Brief is consistent with elements that make Housing First a successful model.

The federal government, most local governments, and housing and services non-profits across California have adopted Housing First for reentry populations, as evidence shows it allows people on parole with substance use disorders to reintegrate successfully into the community. At a time when homelessness is expected to rise exponentially, however, the proposed trailer bill language rejects evidence showing that Housing First is critical to state goals to adopt a policy that risks unacceptably high evictions into homelessness from state-funded programs.

For these reasons, we urge you to reject amendments that will continue the failed policies of the past, and instead reaffirm your commitment to Housing First.

Sincerely,



Sharon Rapport
Corporation for Supportive Housing



Christopher Martin
Housing California



Mike Herald
Western Center on Law & Poverty



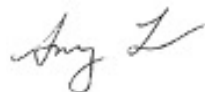
Curtis Child
Disability Rights California



Tomiquia Moss
All Home



Pete Manzo
United Ways of California



Amy Turk
Downtown Women's Center



Mark Wilson
Coalition for Responsible Community Development



Heidi Marston
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority




Va Lecia Adams Kellum
St. Joseph Center



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Elise Buik
United Way of Greater Los Angeles



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Alan Greenlee
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Joel Roberts

Joel Roberts
PATH (People Assisting the Homeless)

Mary Kate Bacalao

Mary Kate Bacalao
Compass Family Services



Amie Fishman
Non-Profit Housing Association of No. CA



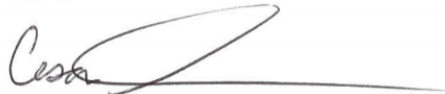
Sue Parks
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Michael Blecker
Swords to Plowshares



Steve Russell
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Cesar Covarrubias
Kennedy Commission



Rob Wiener
California Coalition for Rural Housing