Assembly Bill 71
Bring California Home Act
Assemblywoman Luz Rivas

SUMMARY

Our state is facing an unprecedented homelessness crisis that has the potential of becoming a full-blown catastrophe due to the economic impacts of COVID-19 on low wage earners. Despite being the fifth largest economy in the world, one in four Americans experiencing homelessness resides in California. AB 71 delivers a comprehensive plan toward solving homelessness by investing, for the first time, dedicated annual funding for housing and services to our local governments, implementing accountability and transparency to ensure every dollar is used effectively.

BACKGROUND

According to a recent poll conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, Californians have resoundingly identified homelessness as one of the most pressing issues facing our state.1

However, California has historically financed very few homelessness programs with ongoing funding. Only in recent years has California increased investment to large cities, homeless continuums of care, and counties to combat homelessness. In 2018, the Legislature appropriated $500 million in the Homeless Emergency Assistance Program for shelters and services. In 2019, the Legislature invested $650 million into the Homeless Housing Assistance Program, and another $300 million in 2020. While these one-time allocations helped local governments house thousands of Californians, they have not addressed the full scope of the issues facing people experiencing homelessness.

In response to COVID-19, the state and Governor invested millions of one-time federal CARES Act funding to implement Project Roomkey and Homekey, with the intent of sheltering homeless individuals who are most at risk of contracting the virus. Project Roomkey has reached over 35,000 households. Los Angeles alone identified 15,000 eligible individuals. Homekey, which relied on federal dollars that expired in December 2020, offers a little over 6,000 interim or permanent housing units.

PROBLEM

California is home to the largest homeless population in the country. Over 161,000 of our residents, including children, are unhoused on any given night and two to three times that number experience homelessness in any given year. Thousands more are on the brink of homelessness.

Prior to the pandemic, California’s homeless population was increasing because of the sharp increases in housing costs that are outpacing increases in wages. Between 2018 and 2019, California’s homeless population increased by nearly 17%.2 Researchers believe California could experience another 25% increase in homelessness due to economic fallout from the pandemic.3

Furthermore, our current approach to homelessness does not address the specific needs of communities at greater risk. African Americans, Native Americans, and LGBTQ+ populations have alarmingly high rates of homelessness. African Americans, who represent about 6.5% of Californians, account for nearly 40% of the state’s homeless population. Additionally, our data do not fully represent the number of youth experiencing homelessness in the state.

The state has not been able to make strides in tackling homelessness because local governments fear having to pay for the ongoing costs of programs funded one time. One-time funding in the past has led to restricted uses, wasted administrative time and costs standing up new programs, and little to no accountability. Indeed, our local and state governments are not held accountable for programs’ effectiveness. With a reliable source of revenue, local governments will use funding for proven solutions through effective structural responses, and be held accountable.

SOLUTION

AB 71 will reform the state’s response to homelessness by restructuring the state’s role in preventing and solving homelessness. By conforming to federal law in taxing corporations that shift profits overseas, AB 71 will generate ongoing revenue for long-term solutions to homelessness. These funds will go to local governments so they can invest in housing solutions that take into account a community’s unique needs, whether urban or rural. Moreover, AB 71 offers a comprehensive approach to creating a state strategy, promoting best practices among local jurisdictions, and holding local governments accountable for how the money is spent. Solving California’s homelessness crisis begins with AB 71.

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1 https://www.ppic.org/publication/ppicsheet419-2020/

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The Bring California Home Coalition (Sponsors):
  Corporation for Supportive Housing
  Housing California
  City of Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti
  City of Oakland, Mayor Libby Schaaf
  All Home
  Brilliant Corners
  Episcopal Community Services-San Francisco
  HOPICS
  John Burton Advocates for Youth
  Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
  Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
  National Alliance to End Homelessness
  Non-Profit Housing Assn. of Northern California (NPH)
  Residents United Network
  Speak Up
  Steinberg Institute
  United Way of Greater Los Angeles
  A Community of Friends
  Abode Services
  Abundant Housing LA
  Alameda County Board of Supervisors
  American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
  Alliance Of Californians For Community Empowerment (Acce) Action
  American Civil Liberties Union/Northern California/Southern California/San Diego And Imperial Counties
  American Family Housing
  Bend The Arc: Jewish Action, Southern California
  Bet Tzedek
  California Association Of Student Councils
  California Calls
  California Coalition For Rural Housing
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  California Housing Partnership Corporation
  California Partnership To End Domestic Violence
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  Housing Authority Of The City Of Oakland
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  Housing Is A Human Right OC
  Interface Children & Family Services
  Justice In Aging
  LA Care Health Plan
  Linc Housing
  Lyric
  Mogavero Architects
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  Oakland Homeless Advocacy Working Group
  Open Heart Kitchen
  Operation Dignity Inc
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  Public Law Center
  Rainbow Services, Ltd.
  San Diego Housing Federation
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