**[INSERT DATE]**

The Honorable Holly Mitchell

California State Senate

Sacramento, CA

Re: SB 329 - SUPPORT

**[INSERT ORGANIZATION]** submits this letter to express its support for Senate Bill 329 (Mitchell), the Housing Opportunities Act. This bill would ensure California’s most vulnerable households have access to quality, affordable housing and neighborhoods of opportunity while we work to solve our unprecedented shortage of affordable housing.

Our housing crisis is making the California dream impossible for our lowest-income families, even when they are able to secure assistance that promises to help them afford an apartment on the private market. Even with assistance, many families are unable to even apply for housing due to blanket policies of landlords who refuse to accept housing assistance payments. Eventually, these families are forced to return this valuable assistance unused, even though it is intended to enable them to access housing they otherwise could not afford.

As we work to address our housing crisis, we must also prioritize solutions that address the needs of families struggling with high housing costs. Solutions that allow low-income families to access existing housing are a critical component to addressing the crisis, and the Housing Opportunities Act represents one such solution. SB 329 would include housing assistance as a protected source of income under the Fair Employment and Housing Act. The effect of this change would be to prohibit discrimination against families based on the fact that they receive housing assistance, and would require that assistance to be treated the same as any other form of income. The bill would not affect the amount of rent landlords are able to charge for their units, or what criteria landlords use to screen their tenants; it would simply require landlords to treat families who get help paying their rent the same as other families who apply for housing.

SB 329’s change to the Fair Employment and Housing Act was listed as the number one housing recommendation of the Lifting Children and Families Out of Poverty Task Force, and this policy has a proven record of success. A recent study by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development found that where source of income protections were put in place, families with housing assistance were half as likely to be rejected by landlords when applying for apartments. In addition, research shows that the policy can significantly improve the ability of families to access low-poverty, high-opportunity neighborhoods. The Housing Opportunities Act provides a chance for low-income families with housing assistance to access high-opportunity neighborhoods and stable housing. With a range of jurisdictions stepping up to address the housing crisis through these assistance programs, it is essential to ensure that assistance can actually be used by needy families. Thank you for authoring this important bill.

Sincerely,

**NAME**

**TITLE**

**ORGANIZATION**