

Housing the Unhoused

Calvin Cho, Gavin Alfaro, Joshua Meneses, Sarabaesh Srikumar

Section 1: Legislative Information

SB 290: Housing Density Bonus

SB 290 authored by Senator Nancy Skinner has not been vetoed but is still in the legislative process. It was referred to the committee on Assembly Appropriations. According to the California Housing Partnership Corporation, the state currently has an estimated 1.3 million-unit shortfall of rental units affordable to very low- and extremely low-income households. Four out of five extremely low-income households pay over half of their income in rent, as do nearly half of very low-income households. Such issues are relevant to student housing as many fall under the low - income spectrum. This bill seeks to further incentivize housing for lower- income students by additionally making such a development eligible for one incentive or concession. To make students eligible, at least 20 percent of the units for lower-income students will have to be constructed by housing development projects. The bill will also expand on what units can benefit from a density bonus by tearing down the law which requires that units be in a "common interest development." Instead this will be for developments in which the units are for sale. Incentives or concessions will increase based on the total percent of total units for lower income households. For example, three incentives or concessions for projects that include at least 24 percent of the total units for lower income households, at least 15 percent for very low income households, or at least 30 percent for persons and families of moderate income in development in which the units are for sale. Furthermore, establishments that include 40

percent moderate income for-sale housing and are within one-half mile of a major transit stop will receive a parking reduction of 0.5 parking spaces per bedroom.

SB-74: Keep California Working Act

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen an upsurge in homelessness rates, mainly due to the surge in unemployment while the Consumer Price Index (primary source to indicate inflation) has increased dramatically (the most since 2008). While resettlement is a policy necessary to house the unhoused, it is just as important to work on “prevention.” By keeping people employed and businesses running, the issue of housing can be reduced. This issue is what the Keep California Working Act aims to resolve. As of June 30th, it has not been passed and within legislative floors, and there has been little work done. However, if this bill is passed, it would grant small businesses making a lower bracket of revenue extra funds. This grant money can be used for multiple purposes: payroll, working capital, rent, utilities, mortgage principals, and more. By granting businesses suffering due to the pandemic money, SB-74 hopes to re-establish economic order and stability within the state.

AB 328: Reentry Housing and Workforce Development Program.

AB-328 was authored by Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva, Assemblywoman Buffy Wicks, and co authored by Assemblyman Rob Bonta. It has been in the Appropriations Committee since March 2021. The bill would first establish a Department of Housing and Community Development to administer a slew of laws focused on solving the California housing crisis. Primarily, it hopes to enact a Reentry Housing Act, something which would keep recently incarcerated people out of homelessness and stay housed instead. It would do this from July of

2022 by first scoring applicants on a series of criteria to determine what type of aid they should receive and what their outcomes should be from that aid. The program would then give them aid that helps them receive housing, incentivise landlords to rent out to them, and give them a segue into more permanent state housing assistance programs. The mechanism for awarding this funding would be a 5 year contract with whichever body is receiving the aid, or based on how allotting the money could best help the program member in question. For example, some program members could be best helped if they are directly given money, while others might benefit from the government giving their landlord money directly. At the end of every year, the program beneficiaries will be assessed by an independently contracted agency which will decide how effectively they have used the aid. This will help fine tune aid distribution and mitigate the risk of abuse of funds.

SB 1030: Public Housing

SB 1030 states that each county and each city must create public housing for citizens to use upon request without charge. Sb 1030 prohibits local agencies from disapproving public housing if the public housing complies with state, country, and city requirements including, General planning, Local Zoning, and subdivision standards. SB 1030 also requires local courts to enforce provisions, if certain standards aren't met within 30 days.

Section 2: Executive Information

Department of Community Services and Development

- A. The Department of Community Services and Deployment currently has no director and the seat is vacant as of July 9th, 2021.
- B. The role of this agency is to provide funding to local nonprofits and smaller individuals. It offers these local community programs and services in order to promote economic security that address issues such as but not limited to homelessness, hunger, unemployment, health, and nutrition.
- C. This department offers a wide range of services as an effort to reduce Californian poverty. One such is the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) that has been in practice since 1981. It provides aid to qualifying low-income households by supervising and reaching heating / cooling requirements. In general it provides a one time assistance with financial issues to balance utility costs. In the event that a household is in a crisis, such as receiving a warning before utility termination or the threat of an appliance not up to code, assistance will be provided. Moreover, free upgrades are also issued by LIHEAP Weatherization to downgrade costs and improve health. As a greater gesture educational instructions are given to help households understand what is proper maintenance and how to report faulty appliances. Such a service is related to the topic of housing the unhoused as it attempts to prevent possible evictions due to the inability to pay utility bills. Such a service is crucial, especially in the time of a pandemic in which many Californians who have lost their jobs, face the uncertainty of paying bills. With an added financial boost, Californians in such a dilemma can have the opportunity of staying off the streets.

D. In addition to LIHEAP, the department also offers the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). This service has been crafted with the sole purpose of reducing poverty for families and individuals since 1964. It offers the ability to be educated in skills, knowledge and achieve a sense of motivation which would inevitably lead to self-sustaining behaviour. Within this program an array of services are listed. These include, youth, education, emergency, employment, nutrition, health, homeless, housing, income management, senior, and transportation services. Overall the program seeks holes in community opportunities and patch them for equality. One notable highlight from the program was 40 Prado Homeless Services Center. As a 24 hour facility it cares for around 100 occupants, an average of 10 being children who are homeless. Despite many suffering from chronic drug abuse and mental illness, the facility offers education in how to stabilize.

Another service is offered through the North State Food Bank and Disaster Response efforts. In times of emergency the service will provide immediate aid to struggling personnel or for those in need of nutrition can go through here to gain it. CSBG is another great program for our topic of housing the unhoused. It allows for homeless individuals to get back on their feet and find a palace within our working society. It teaches not only financial stability, but provides help for those dealing with mental or drug problems.

E. The services that the Department of Community Services and Development offers are easily accessible by “low-income households.” However, one issue with these programs is that a lot of people who are in need of those services cannot get access to them because of their income bracket. For those right above the “low-income” definition, they often cannot afford solar panels or utilities but cannot use these programs to get access to

needed products. Moreover, the programs do not take into consideration the state's geographical locations. Due to city inflation and high costs, those making a higher wage in cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles may often have less spending money available than those with lower wages in rural areas. The department's services do not consider these regional differences and people living in cities may be put at disadvantage. In order to solve this, the department can create specific definitions per region to make sure currency value differences do not hinder people in need of department services from getting what they need. Another way to solve this would be to expand the program to make it more applicable to more people. Instead of focusing on specifically "low-income" families, the department can instead expand their services to constituents in need of these programs.

An additional problem would be with long-term solutions. While the Low-Income Weatherization Program offers people solar panels that can provide sustainable energy for years, a major issue is that the people in use of these products may not be able to sustain their current living status. While the government can work to alleviate people distressed due to poverty, there must be ways for those people to sustain themselves eventually without a government program in order to truly address homelessness. The Department of Community Services and Development does not specifically address any partnership with other departments or nonprofits that could provide more sustainable options such as education and home availability. In order to maximize their services, the department should and must focus on solutions that can directly tackle poverty and homelessness, not just reduce its effects.

Department of Real Estate

- A. The director of the Department of Real Estate is Doug McCauley.
- B. The role of the department is to manage the laws, regulations, and licensing regarding real estate. The mission statement of the department states that its goal, “is to safeguard and promote the public interests in real estate matters through licensure, regulation, education and enforcement.” The department’s services are tailored to housing buyers, real estate agents, developers, real estate license applicants, and the press. It provides information and assistance to all of the aforementioned people in order to make housing as accessible as possible from the supply side of the housing market. While the role of the market does offer aid for the demand side, its primary role is facilitation and regulation of the supply side.
- C. For consumers, one important service they offer is verifying a real estate license. This has been a service since the start of the department, and is especially important in preventing scams where someone pretends to be an agent. Moreover, they also offer protection from predatory practices, specifically real estate malpractice. They can either directly take legal action against agents who violate rules and ordinances, or put the client in contact with a private team if they can afford it. Malpractice entitles victims to compensation, and this department makes sure that the compensation is accessible, and that victims can easily identify forms of malpractice. They also help consumers establish contracts with materials brokers, which has been a service since the department’s founding. This helps consumers easily get access to materials if they don’t know who to ask.

On the supply side end, the primary services in this department concern licensing of agents. They allow agents to update, renew, and obtain their licenses. This service has

been in place since the founding of the agency, since it is the primary reason the agency was created in the first place. More importantly, they allow for specialty licensing, which helps agents tailor and specialize their clientele and the real estate that they sell. This helps agents make more money, as well as ideally increase the access of housing via specialization of real estate practices. They also help with agent promotion and education as well. All of these services have been offered since the department's founding.

- D. The services are readily available through the Department of Real Estate's website, or you can go through your local city hall. The issue that instantly arises is the accessibility of certain Loans that are available to homeowners. There is more money offered through private lenders which can be horrible to low income individuals. The money that California benefits from comes from taxpayers and comes from the working classes' labour, that money should be able to go back out easier, and cheaper without as hefty interest rates.

Section 3: Judicial Information

One issue is with how courts have been ruling on current homeless people. Along city lines, there have been anti-camping ordinances in Irvine, Aliso Viejo, Dana Point, San Clemente, and San Juan Capistrano. These cities' policies have generally been backed by courts; for example, U.S. District Judge David O. Carter approved the removal of homeless people in cities such as Santa Ana. These types of offensive strategies against homelesses have made it hard for one to get out of the homeless hole once they are in it. Moreover, it has hurt inter-district lines, pushing people from one area to another. While there have been lawsuits made against these judicial precedents, it has been rough to overturn these embedded legislatures.

A severe issue with preventing homelessness right now is the lack of accessibility to government funded programs. With homelessness being a rather sudden situational position rather than a gradual one (sudden loss of jobs, medical accidents that raise hospital bills, etc.), there is a severe lack of government programs that can offer help. State departments such as the Department of Community Services and Development as well as the Department of Real Estate have worked to create solutions regarding stipends and gradual financial aid; these funds are either difficult to receive or apply for due to lack of accessibility.

Section 4: Recommendations

De-Criminalization of Homelessness:

This policy would be extremely effective in assisting the homeless population. One of the largest obstacles faced by the homeless population in California is that they have no way of protecting themselves against state violence. Given this, and the fact that being a marginalized population should grant them Extra Agency, it's important that they receive some form of legal representation should they face it's right from their Community or state. While policies like this have never been experimented with, the unique position of the California homelessness crisis makes it an ideal time to try this policy. Moreover, during the training period for public prosecutors, if the consequences of the program go awry under the stewardship of the contracted firms, legislators can always end the program prematurely. The pros of this policy include: offering rights to the homeless that they are not normally given, preventing displacements or mistreatment of the homeless population, and potentially decreasing homelessness via settlement money from the lawsuits. Conversely, there are several downsides to this policy. namely there's no mechanism to stop a potential snowballing of cases against the state. This could lead to California making massive payouts, which could compromise on other social programs or potentially lead to tax increases

Labour Unions

California has the largest active workforce in the nation, as well as the largest state GDP where we rank 5th internationally. With higher wages being a major impact and guarantee of being involved in a labour union, we can see a direct impact on the economy and on individual housing situations. When wages increase there is a higher chance that individuals will purchase

homes rather than rent, which in turn, decreases the chance of homelessness. Though beneficial, Labour Unions charge a fee in order to hire lawyers or spokespeople against the company which may scare away workers who are uneducated on the union. When a majority of workers are unionized, and are getting paid a higher wage, there is no negative impact on workforce productivity. In fact, it is the opposite, worker productivity increases when more workers are in fact unionized.

Healthcare Reform

Such a step would attempt to reform the current healthcare system by making all medical infrastructure state owned. Tragically, of the ~151,000 homeless people in California 68% have outstanding medical debt. In fact, 17% of homeless people are veterans (undercovered by the VA and other government agencies) The pros of reform would revolve around increasing public access, erasing medical debt and mitigating the need to reduce government programs via a bipartisan appeal. Such a system could also increase medication access by taking advantage of the economics of sale. However while such a system may seem beneficial in all ways there are some major downsides that should be noted. As a con such a reform requires upfront capital expenditure in order to transition everything to a new light. Furthermore, nothing is guaranteed that the savings from the reform will even materialize into reality. In addition, average middle class families will also be greatly impacted. Under the Affordable healthcare Act for example the average savings per person was \$74 but for a family of 6 spending rose to \$1000 each year. Finally, this system only works if the majority complies. So there will be a system of penalties which will somehow always affect people who can't comply somehow. Overall, the effectiveness

system can't truly be determined as transitioning the state from its current system formulates a gap of uncertainties in terms of affecting various groups of people across the state.

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