April 26, 2019

Assemblymember Mark Stone
Chair, Assembly Committee on Judiciary
1020 N Street, Room 162
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SUPPORT for Assembly Bill 1481 (Bonta)

Dear Assemblymember Stone,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Commission, we write in strong support of Assembly Bill 1481 (Bonta), which would establish a statewide legal threshold for evictions.

LAHSA is a joint powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles and serves as the lead agency in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC). LAHSA is responsible for funding a significant portion of the interim housing, permanent housing, and supportive services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County.

Amid California’s affordability crisis, many households facing eviction have few housing options. Los Angeles County needs an additional 568,225 rental units for very-low and extremely-low income households to meet rising demand.\(^1\) More than 70% of the state’s lowest income households spend 50% or more of their incomes on rent alone, forcing renters to confront difficult tradeoffs between housing and necessities like food, healthcare, and education that support the well-being of their families.\(^2\) As a result, tenants have little security against unplanned rent hikes or other expenses that continue to make staying housed unaffordable. As neighborhoods face intensifying displacement pressures and limited housing alternatives, more Californians are now at high risk of eviction and homelessness.

Assembly Bill 1481 lowers that risk by providing California renters with legal protections against unfair and arbitrary evictions. By establishing clear parameters around legal evictions, this bill creates a more transparent process without inhibiting a landlord’s ability to evict a tenant for lease violations or intentions to remove a unit from the rental market. In the even: of a no-fault cause, this bill ensures that tenants receive relocation assistance necessarily to find new housing. Absent legal protections, evictions force residents not only out of their homes but often their neighborhoods. Evictions destabilize families and communities, with devastating effects on health outcomes, employment and education access, and deepen economic hardships. As we see in Los Angeles, they also push households to the brink of homelessness.\(^3\)

---

\(^1\) California Housing Partnership Corporation. (May 2018.) “Los Angeles County’s Housing Emergency and Proposed Solutions.”

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (October 2018.) “Protect Tenants, Prevent Homelessness.”
On any given night in Los Angeles County, just under 53,000 individuals are experiencing homelessness. While we have placed a record number of homeless residents into housing, successes are tempered by high rates of new entries into the system. More than 9,000 unsheltered adults in the LA CoC reported their first experience of homelessness within the past year, a 16% increase from 2017. Forty-six percent (46%) attributed their housing loss to economic reasons, including evictions.

“Just cause” protections provide certainty for renters during this housing crisis, which has a disproportional effect on marginalized communities including communities of color, women, families, and older adults. Research finds that low-income women, particularly women of color, and families are at especially high risk of eviction. In California, nearly two in five Black/African American households are severely rent burdened, the highest rate across ethnic and racial groups. Without meaningful policy solutions, these racial inequities in the rental market challenge our efforts to reduce the stark racial inequities in the demographics of the homeless population. Last year, LAHSA convened the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness to explore the systemic drivers of homelessness that disproportionally affect Black/African American county residents. In its findings, the committee recommended wider “just cause” eviction requirements in the private market.

At present, a limited number of cities in Los Angeles County and unincorporated Los Angeles County have “just cause” requirements written into existing rent control measures. Many of these cities have enacted or explored ways to extend protections to non-covered units, recognizing the value of these requirements for all their residents. This bill ensures that Californians, regardless of where they live, receive protections against facing unjust evictions.

To ensure the strongest application of these measures, “just cause” measures must be accompanied by effective tenant education efforts and enforcement mechanisms that quickly intervene when an unlawful eviction is served. Additionally, we encourage clarity around standards for at-fault just causes, such as waste, to ensure these grounds are fair, reasonable, and consistent with existing local measures.

Stronger tenant protections increase housing stability and insure against future homelessness. As such, we urge your support for this bill and look forward to continuing to work together to reduce and end homelessness across California.

Sincerely,

Kelli Bernard
Chair, LAHSA Commission

Peter Lynn
Executive Director

---

4 2018 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count
5 Desmond, M. (2016.) “Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City.”
7 Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. (2017.) “America’s Rental Housing 2017 – Renter Cost Burdens by Race and Ethnicity.”
8 Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. (December 2018.) “Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness.”