



April 8, 2024

The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
Senate Local Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 2220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT- SB 634 (Perez) - homelessness: civil and criminal penalties

Dear Chair Durazo,

On behalf of All Home, I am writing in support of SB 634, which would eliminate criminal and civil penalties for being homeless and conducting basic activities to ensure survival outside.

All Home advances solutions to disrupt the cycles of homelessness and poverty, and to create more housing and economic security for Californians with the lowest incomes.

California's homelessness crisis is decades in the making, the result of policy choices, including jurisdictions around California failing to create and preserve affordable housing. California jurisdictions fell 80% short of their goals to create sufficient housing for very low-income households in the most recent cycle of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). As a result, over one million extremely low-income households pay more than half their income on rent, and vulnerable Californians are falling into homelessness every day. Over 300,000 households cycling through homelessness in 2024, according to data from the State's Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS). Moreover, once people become homeless, California's resources to rehouse them are well short of the need, with 76,000 shelter beds and only 79,000 units of supportive housing around the state.

Simply put, putting onerous penalties such as jail time, fines, and fees on individuals for a problem created by public policy is cruel and abdicates our collective responsibility to solve this problem. These penalties also make homelessness harder to solve. Research shows **jail time for homelessness severs ties with community-based service providers** trying to implement publicly-funded rehousing programs and limits pathways back into housing. Fines and fees, which often cost more to collect than actual citation amounts, prolong homelessness and threaten future housing stability. These penalties exacerbate racial

inequalities long present in both homelessness and the criminal justice system. **Instead, all levels of government should be working together to rapidly scale interim and permanent housing, and double down on efforts to prevent homelessness for those at highest risk of experiencing it.**

SB 634 will encourage local jurisdictions to address homelessness in a more effective manner—by leading with services and connections to housing—instead of punitive approaches that years of evidence have shown fail to address the problem. We appreciate your consideration and urge you to join us in supporting the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett Andrews", written in a cursive style.

Brett Andrews
Interim Chief Executive
All Home