

April 20, 2023

Assemblymember Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 799 (L. RIVAS), AS AMENDED

Dear Chair Wicks,

On behalf of MidPen Housing, we write in strong support of Assembly Bill 799 (AB 799) as amended, authored by Assemblywoman Luz Rivas, the Homelessness Accountability and Results Act.

MidPen Housing is one of the nation's leading nonprofit developers, owners, and managers of high-quality, affordable housing and onsite resident services. Since MidPen was founded in 1970, we have developed over 125 communities and 8,500 homes for low-income families, seniors and those with supportive housing needs throughout Northern California.

Over the last several years, the State of California has made historic investments to address homelessness, including allocations for the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention (HHAP) program. These programs have made enormous leaps forward for California. Prior to the FY 18-19 budget, the State invested very little in supporting local responses to homelessness.

However, as a dramatic shortage of available affordable housing for people with the lowest incomes continues to lead vulnerable Californians to fall into homelessness faster than local homeless services systems can rehouse them, the State and our local governments must do more to reduce homelessness. To bring sustainable reductions in the number of people falling into and experiencing homelessness the state must:

- Set ambitious but achievable data-informed goals that, in turn, drive local goal-setting,
- Support a stable homeless services workforce that can deliver solutions consistently and at scale,
- Move from unpredictable one-time allocations of funding to ongoing funding,
- Focus homelessness resources on evidence-based solutions that end people's homelessness permanently,
- Center racial equity and the voices of people with lived expertise of homelessness, and
- Drive stronger regional collaboration, planning, and local implementation of effective homelessness reduction strategies.

AB 799 (L. Rivas) would achieve these goals and, in so doing, establish a strong accountability and results framework. By creating a comprehensive goal setting and regional collaboration and planning process, and making changes to the goal setting and accountability processes in the HHAP program, this

legislation would ensure local jurisdictions invest their homelessness resources in proven solutions that quickly rehouse people and reduce homelessness. If local recipients fail to achieve specific benchmarks, they could face being unable to access state homelessness funding.

By seeking a path towards ongoing funding, AB 799 would also allow local service providers to hire and retain the staff they need, which would allow local responses to finally reach the scale to rehouse people faster than they are falling into homelessness, and to ramp up homelessness prevention efforts that can turn off the spigot of vulnerable people becoming homeless for the first time.

Finally, the legislation would advance racial equity in a number of ways, ensuring that local responses to homelessness are rooted in efforts to rectify the decades of racist policies that have resulted in a disproportionate number of people who are Black and Indigenous experiencing homelessness, along with rising numbers of Latinx people experiencing homelessness. The legislation would pursue changes to contracting, hiring, data collection, and policymaking processes to ensure racial equity is being advanced within homeless service system responses as well.

AB 799 is the only homelessness accountability and funding legislation that was developed with input from people with lived expertise of homelessness, policy experts, community-based service providers, local governments, and state agencies. We thank Assemblywoman Rivas for advancing this transformative legislation and urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew O. Franklin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew O. Franklin
President and CEO
MidPen Housing Corporation

cc: Omar Hashemyan, omar.hashemyan@asm.ca.gov