



March 28, 2023

The Honorable Esmeralda Soria
Chair, Assembly Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
1020 N Street, Room 389
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Measures to Improve California's Behavioral Healthcare System
Notice of Support in Concept *(As of 04/06/23)*

Dear Assembly Member Soria,

The League of California Cities (Cal Cities) is pleased to support in concept a suite of measures introduced in the Legislature, in partnership with the initiatives recently announced by Gov. Gavin Newsom, to improve the state's behavioral healthcare system, address the state's homelessness crisis, and spur the development of affordable housing.

To this end, Cal Cities supports in concept AB 1656 (Wicks), AB 1657 (Wicks), SB 834 (Portantino), and AB 531 (Irwin), which would provide substantial funding for homelessness and affordable housing programs. These bills would authorize, collectively, the issuance of more than \$25 billion in bonds across a variety of programs to fund the construction, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable housing and permanent supportive housing. Within the context of the concurrent crises of lack of affordable housing and increases in individuals experiencing homelessness, if authorized, these measures would provide twice the funding included in the 2022 State Budget Act for similar programs.

Cities across the state are weaving together limited-term funding opportunities to fund creative solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness in their communities. Limited-term funding with restricted access inhibits cities' long-term planning efforts and stifles more ambitious goals. Cities support pairing funding and resources with appropriate accountability and transparency measures.

Furthermore, Cal Cities commends the Governor's proposal for a measure to include on the November 2024 ballot to improve how California treats mental illness, substance use, and homelessness by supporting a comprehensive system of care. This two-part initiative would authorize the issuance of bonds for construction of facilities for behavioral health treatment and facilities for housing for homeless veterans, and would amend the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63, 2004) to expand the eligible uses of the Mental Health Services Act revenue to include serious mental health care (as opposed to mild-to-moderate mental healthcare) and substance use disorder services, and would allocate \$1 billion in revenue, annually, for these expanded eligible expenditures.



Cal Cities applauds the Governor's recognition that long-term solutions require long-term funding, as demonstrated by the announcement of this proposed 2024 ballot initiative. As stated above, local governments are on the front lines of service delivery and program administration for California's most vulnerable populations, and a strong state-local fiscal partnership would advance our shared goals for behavioral healthcare and addressing homelessness and lack of affordable housing in this state.

For these reasons, Cal Cities **supports in concept** this suite of measures. We look forward to working with you to realize an even stronger partnership for the benefit of all Californians. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us at jrhine@calcities.org and ccirincione@calcities.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caroline Cirrincione".

Caroline Cirrincione
Legislative Affairs, Lobbyist

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Rhine".

Jason Rhine
Assistant Director, Legislative Affairs