

1 [Supporting California State Senate Bill 1045 (Wiener, Stern) - Conservatorship: Chronic
2 Homelessness and Substance Abuse Disorders]

3 **Resolution supporting California State Senate Bill 1045, authored by Senators Scott**
4 **Wiener and Henry Stern, expanding California’s mental health conservatorship law to**
5 **include individuals suffering from chronic homelessness when accompanied by**
6 **debilitating mental illness, severe drug addiction, repeated psychiatric commitments,**
7 **or excessively frequent use of emergency medical services.**

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9 WHEREAS, Many individuals in San Francisco are struggling with severe mental
10 health challenges, and research shows rates of mental illness are elevated among vulnerable
11 populations, including people experiencing homelessness; and

12 WHEREAS, According to the 2017 Homeless Count and Survey Comprehensive
13 Report (“Report”), San Francisco has approximately 7,499 homeless individuals, 3,840 of
14 which are unsheltered living in tents in our parks and on our streets; and

15 WHEREAS, Approximately 31 percent of San Francisco’s homeless population is
16 chronically homeless. Chronic homelessness is defined as individuals who have experienced
17 homelessness for a year or longer or who have experienced at least four episodes of
18 homelessness in the last three years, and also have a condition that prevents them from
19 maintaining work or housing; and

20 WHEREAS, According to the Report, more than two-thirds of San Francisco’s
21 homeless population reported one or more health conditions, 41 percent reported struggling
22 with drug and alcohol abuse, and 39 percent reported suffering from a psychiatric or
23 emotional condition; and

24 WHEREAS, These same health conditions are even more acute for San Francisco’s
25 chronically homeless population; 65 percent of individuals who are chronically homeless

1 reported struggling with drug and alcohol abuse, 63 percent reported suffering from a
2 psychiatric or emotional condition, and 45 percent reported Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Many homeless individuals grapple with a confluence of mental health,
5 medical, and substance abuse issues, with the most at-risk subset of the population
6 (approximately 338 individuals according to health data in 2016) accessing the most
7 emergency services; and

8 WHEREAS, In 2016 San Francisco's Department of Public Health provided medical,
9 mental health, or substance abuse services to 9,975 homeless individuals, 75 percent of
10 whom used emergency health services at a cost to the City of more than \$150,000,000; and

11 WHEREAS, Chronically homeless individuals are one of the most vulnerable
12 populations on our streets with a mortality rate four to nine times higher than the general
13 population; and

14 WHEREAS, California has two conservatorship programs: those allowed the
15 Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act, which are designed for individuals unable to care for
16 themselves due to debilitating mental illness, and those permitted pursuant to the Probate
17 Code designed for individuals unable to care for themselves due to physical health issues,
18 cognitive impairment, or elder abuse; and

19 WHEREAS, Existing state conservatorship laws are limited, and in many cases,
20 excludes those who are chronically homeless and have severe mental illness or drug
21 addiction, and is therefore unable to assist San Francisco in fully addressing the needs of
22 many chronically homeless individuals who are suffering on our streets; and

23 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Public Conservator provides mental health
24 conservatorship services for residents who are gravely disabled due to mental illness, and
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1 who have been found by the Court to be unable or unwilling to accept voluntary treatment;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Chronically homeless individuals grappling with severe mental illness
4 and/or a debilitating drug addiction are often difficult to treat with the existing short-term
5 psychiatric programs and outpatient drug treatments available outside of conservatorship;
6 these individuals often cycle in and out of treatment and have difficulty maintaining stable
7 housing; and

8 WHEREAS, There currently is no avenue to conserve individuals in a supportive
9 housing environment which provides wraparound services; and

10 WHEREAS, The existing status quo is not adequately serving our most vulnerable
11 population in San Francisco, including those who are chronically homeless and suffering from
12 grave mental health challenges and substance abuse issues; and

13 WHEREAS, It is not compassionate to allow individuals to suffer on our streets with
14 severe mental health and substance abuse issues, and as a city, we must treat all individuals
15 who are grappling with these issues with compassion and dignity while also helping them get
16 healthy, housed, and stabilized for the long-term; and

17 WHEREAS, In recognition that greater flexibility is needed for local governments to
18 provide adequate support for chronically homeless individuals; and

19 WHEREAS, California Senate Bill 1045 (SB 1045) sponsored by Senators Scott
20 Wiener and Henry Stern, creates a new type of conservatorship that focuses on providing
21 housing with wraparound services to the most vulnerable individuals living on the streets; and

22 WHEREAS, Under SB 1045, in order to be considered for conservatorship, an
23 individual must be chronically homeless, suffering from serious mental illness or substance
24 use disorder such that those co-occurring conditions have resulted in that individual frequently
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1 visiting the emergency room, being frequently detained by police under a 5150, or frequently
2 held for psychiatric evaluation and treatment; and

3 WHEREAS, SB 1045 would give the San Francisco Public Conservator greater ability
4 to conserve individuals who cannot care for themselves and meet these criteria and provide
5 them long-term care and treatment in supportive housing with wraparound services for up to
6 one year; now, therefore be it

7 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors for the City and County of San Francisco
8 hereby supports and urges the California State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign
9 SB 1045; and be it

10 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors hereby directs
11 the Clerk of the Board to send a copy of this Resolution to the Governor of California, the
12 California State Senate, and the California State Assembly.

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