

# Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

AGING IS SOMETHING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON

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April 7, 2023

The Honorable Marie Alvarado-Gil  
Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services  
1020 N Street, Suite 521  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Senate Bill 37 (Caballero)

Dear Senator Alvarado-Gil:

On behalf of the Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County, I am writing in strong support of SB 37 (Caballero). Senior Services Coalition (SSC) represents 47 organizations that provide health and supportive services to low-income older adults in Alameda County, and are committed to advancing public policy that improves health and life outcomes for older adults. SB 37 will further our organization's goals in preventing and ending homelessness among thousands of older adults and people living with disabilities. We appreciate your commitment to this issue.

Older Californians living on fixed incomes face increasing housing cost burdens. Roughly 8 out of 10 extremely low-income older renters pay more than half of their monthly income for rent. The disparity between income and housing costs is the reason that older adults are the fastest growing age group experiencing homelessness in California. This is particularly impacting African American/Black households, who are over five times more likely to become homeless than Californians as a whole.

An older adult experiencing homelessness is likely to have health conditions and functional status similar to, or worse, than someone 10-20 years older. Moreover, as individuals experiencing homelessness age, they are likely to incur increasingly greater health care costs from hospitalization and nursing home placement. Because people with disabilities are far more likely to live in poverty, about 45% of those experiencing homelessness are living with a disability.

These startling statistics helped inform California's first Master Plan for Aging, which calls on California to expand housing and homelessness solutions for older adults and people with disabilities. The MPA Impact Committee and the Disability and Aging Community Living Advisory Committee both included targeted rental subsidies as the top need for Californians experiencing or at risk of homelessness as older adults and people with disabilities.

SB 37 will create a program to fund housing vouchers to prevent older adults and people living with disabilities from falling into homelessness and to end experiences of homelessness among these populations. Data show housing subsidies are highly effective in preventing and ending homelessness. Further, in assessing eligibility for prevention resources, SB 37 will rely on risk factors identified by the California Policy Lab, to ensure the State is targeting prevention resources to those truly at risk. SB 37 will fund best practices to ensure landlords in the private market and non-profit affordable housing market accept housing vouchers. Finally, the bill tasks the administering agency, the California Department of Housing and Community Development, to work with local housing authorities to convert State-funded housing vouchers to federal Housing Choice ("Section 8") turn-over vouchers, to ensure this five-year program can sustain participants in housing over the long term.

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SB 37 is thoughtful, strategic, and predicated on data and best practices. For these reasons, we thank you for your leadership over this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wendy Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Wendy" and last name "Peterson" clearly distinguishable.

Wendy Peterson  
Director, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County