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February 8, 2017

Assemblymember David Chiu
Chair, Assembly Committee on Housing & Community Development
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Assembly Bill 74, Housing for a Healthy California

Dear Assemblymember Chiu—

On behalf of our 750 plus members, the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH) is writing to voice our strong support of Assembly Bill 74 which would create the Housing for a Healthy California program. This bill will ensure that many of the Bay Area's nearly 30,000 homeless residents can have a roof over their heads.

Founded in 1979, NPH is the collective voice of those who support, build and finance affordable housing. We are 750 affordable housing developers, advocates, community leaders and businesses, working to secure resources, promote good policy, educate the public and support affordable homes as the foundation for thriving individuals, families and neighborhoods.

AB 74 can create real, sustainable progress for solving chronic homelessness in our region and across our state by giving chronically homeless individuals in poor health a chance to heal and rebuild their lives in a stable environment. AB 74 will create a "Housing for a Healthy California" program to move people out of chronic homelessness to supportive housing by funding local rental assistance programs matched with services funding, like the Medi-Cal Whole Person Care pilot or Health Home Program. With this program, we can ensure that our most vulnerable residents can lead lives with dignity and get the care they need.

Housing is healthcare

Acknowledging decades of research demonstrating supportive housing decreases Medicaid costs among homeless beneficiaries, California's Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) proposed using Medi-Cal to fund rental assistance in their 1115 Medicaid Waiver proposal to the federal government. The Federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) then approved a 1115 waiver that includes the Whole Person Care pilot program which allows counties to match federal funds to pay for services that help people find housing and remain housed. DHCS is also working to implement a new Health Home Program that would fund these services for high-cost homeless beneficiaries.

Assembly Bill 74 would complete the “Whole Person Care” nature of the 1115 pilots and the Health Home Program by creating a “Housing for a Healthy California” Program at the state-level. The Program would fund rental assistance tied to services dollars included in programs like the Whole Person Care pilot and the Health Home Program.

AB 74 is sustainable and cost-effective

Paying for the hospital stays of homeless people without also putting a roof over their heads has proven to be both ineffectual and cost-intensive. Californians experiencing homelessness incur disproportionate costs to local and state programs, costing an average \$2,897 per month. Frequent hospital users who are also homeless also typically cost more for hospitals to take care for the longer they remain homeless. Despite high health costs, people experiencing homelessness have poor health outcomes and often-shortened lives.

AB 74 is a one-time investment that would decrease Medi-Cal costs through improving the health outcomes of the chronically homeless. A rigorous evaluation would determine any changes to Medi-Cal costs from moving homeless participants into housing, providing the Legislature with the data to determine whether future investments are warranted.

Thank you for your leadership in drafting legislation that fosters federal-state-county investment in ending homelessness. We look forward to working with you to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Amie Fishman
Executive Director
Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH)