HOUSING CALIFORNIA

2022 Legislative Review

Aiming High and Falling Short

While the 2022 legislative year presented the State with an opportunity to deliver a bold response to its housing affordability and homelessness challenges and ensure all Californians had access to a stable place to call home, the end result delivered a handful of meaningful wins but did not meet the moment of that grander mandate. Throughout the year, Housing California, Residents United Network (RUN) and our coalition members successfully advanced a multitude of proposals including Roadmap Home 2030 evidence-based solutions aimed at providing a viable path to affordable housing and supportive services. While state leadership passed several game-changing housing laws, it also fell short of enacting a number of barrier-breaking solutions and investments that would have charted a clearer path to end our affordable housing crisis. In the end, political discord resulted in more piecemeal housing solutions, a concerning court-based approach to addressing homelessness and mental health, and further fueled political backlash that moves us away from evidence-based, Housing-First solutions.

California started 2022 with a shortfall of over 1 million affordable housing units and critical housing services as it moved through its third year of a global pandemic and economic fallout. More Californians than last year were experiencing housing insecurity than ever before. Data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2022 *Out of Reach* report shows that renters had to earn 2.6 times the state minimum wage to afford average asking rent for a two-bedroom unit. Although California has more than doubled production of new affordable homes in the past 3 years, the State only funds 16%* of what it needs to meet its goals. Given all that and considering the state experienced a budget surplus of $97.5 billion, advocates proposed a list of ambitious housing and homelessness proposals which could have transformed the lives of Californians on the verge or in the midst of homelessness. While only a few of those proposals were signed into law or funded through the budget, they helped provide a slate of innovative solutions aimed at ensuring more Californians could access affordable housing, including low-income households struggling the most. You can find Housing California's analysis of the budget here.

Legislative Wins

Housing California applauds the passing of co-sponsored legislation **SCA 2 (Allen)**, a Constitutional amendment to lower the voter threshold for affordable housing development. If approved by voters in 2024, this Roadmap Home priority would remove a vestige of racist policy in state law and facilitate the production of more sorely needed housing statewide.

Governor Newsom signed three Housing California co-sponsored bills. **AB 2334 (Wicks)** unlocks the development potential of affordable housing on sites with very low vehicle travel areas. **SB 948 (Becker**) and **AB 2094 (R. Rivas)** create more efficiency and accountability in government by allowing State agencies to reduce the cost of producing affordable housing, and better capture data on housing production for extremely low-income Californians, respectively. Housing California also supported **AB 2011 (Wicks)**, a bill that streamlines the production of new affordable housing in commercial zones with strong labor provisions. While AB 2011 is a huge step forward, Housing California is committed to continuing work with our partners to ensure policies like these mitigate development pressures in low-income communities.

Housing California supported other key housing legislation signed into law that align with the Roadmap Home 2030, including bills that help specific groups of Californians uniquely impacted by the housing crisis. **SB 1017 (Eggman**) strengthens protections for renters who are survivors of domestic violence, while **SB 914 (Rubio)** creates a framework to measure progress in preventing and ending homelessness among domestic violence survivors.

State leaders also advanced policy to protect people experiencing homelessness and improve the homeless response system. **AB 1991 (Gabriel)** prohibits discriminatory hotel and motel policies that target homeless shelter program participants, such as termination, excess fees, and property access policies. **AB 2483 (Maienshein)** will support older adults and people with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness by utilizing existing resources in the Multifamily Housing Program to foster the creation of permanent supportive housing. Visit our Policy Agenda page for the full list of Housing CA tracked bills.

Residents United Network Inspires the State Capitol

The 2022 legislative year was pivotal for the Residents United Network (RUN) as they advanced two equity-centered bills in partnership with Assemblymember Isaac Bryan and Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel. The bills moved through both houses but ultimately failed to get signed without state budget funding.

AB 1816 (Bryan) continued efforts from 2021 (AB 328, Chiu) to create housing and job support for people leaving prison who are experiencing homelessness. RUN and coalition members across housing and reentry relentlessly made the case that no one should be denied access to housing.

In his testimony on AB 1816 (Bryan) to the Senate Housing Committee, Stockton RUN leader Nick Worrell educated members that Californians with a history of incarceration are ten times more likely to experience homelessness, and imagined how his reentry experience might have looked different had a program like AB 1816's existed.

For the first time in its history, RUN co-sponsored legislation with Housing California – **AB 1961 (Gabriel)** – which proposed to create an online database that would make it easier for low-income people to find and apply to affordable housing across the state. The idea emerged from RUN's 'There Ought to be a Law' process in 2021 and received bipartisan support in the Legislature.

Among the bill's most ardent supporters was senior RUN leader and Housing California Board member Willie Stevens. Our community experienced heart-felt loss when we learned of his passing in August. Willie testified in support of AB 1961 (Gabriel) at an Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee, stating, "I prayed to god each night before I closed my eyes that I wouldn't end up homeless. I'm here today to fight to end homelessness and ask for your support to pass AB 1961." Willie always exhibited strength, grace, and courage as he worked tirelessly to help realize housing justice for struggling community members. Assemblymember Gabriel honored Willie's life and commitment to housing justice by Adjourning the Assembly in Memory of him. Willie will be missed by everyone fortunate enough to have met him.

Housing First Solves Homelessness

Despite skyrocketing rents and growing inflation leading hundreds of thousands of Californians to feel the pinch of housing insecurity, public frustration at the lack of visible progress on homelessness also defined the politics of 2022's state legislative session, informing several punitive homelessness proposals and fueling a growing backlash against the concept of "Housing First" and investments in permanent supportive housing. Housing California and partners opposed several pieces of legislation, including proposals to ban encampments in local parks statewide, repeal California's Housing First law, and most notably, **SB 1338 (Umberg)**, the proposal that was signed into law to create a new civil court system to compel mental health treatment for people with psychotic disorders, many of whom experience homelessness.

On the affirmative side, Housing California sponsored two bills that push for and build on housing first policies. The first is **AB 2817 (Reyes)** which would've created a statewide program that would provide direct rental assistance to immediately house people currently unhoused. Additionally, **AB 1685 (Bryan)**, sought to relieve parking ticket debt for people experiencing homelessness who live in their cars, and protect them against losing their vehicle due to debt. Despite its broad bipartisan support in the legislature, both of these measures were ultimately vetoed by Governor Newsom.

Outside of the state legislature, 2022 also saw numerous local jurisdictions passing and enforcing new local ordinances to criminalize survival and expand sweeps of encampments, despite the documented impacts of criminalization on harming the health and housing outcomes of people experiencing homelessness, and the significant cost of enforcement compared to housing solutions. Moving in to 2023, Housing California looks forward to collaborating with state legislators, local system leaders, and impacted community members in shifting our solutions to unsheltered homelessness towards what we know works: affordable and supportive housing, robust support services, and person-centered interim housing solutions to keep unhoused neighbors out of harm's way while meeting their needs.

Forging the Path Together

While the 2022 legislative year did not produce the transformative legislation needed to ensure all Californians have a safe, secure place to call home, we saw pivotal changes that can lay the groundwork for more impactful measures in the coming year. If California is serious about reversing the troubling direction of our housing crisis, helping unhoused Californians exit homelessness, and protecting disenfranchised populations from housing discrimination, we must call upon our state leaders to embrace evidence-based solutions that comprehensively address every aspect of housing like those captured in Roadmap Home. As increasing housing costs drive more Californians into homelessness and housing instability, the Governor and Legislature will face continuing pressure to meet our collective housing needs.

Looking forward to the 2023 legislative year, we are committed to working with legislators to explore and advance innovative policy solutions that will open new paths to housing stability and support services for all Californians. Housing California is excited to continue our work in the state legislature with the Stable Homes Coalition to advance a statewide tenant- and community- opportunity to purchase act **(TOPA-COPA)**, and to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing through the Community Anti-Displacement and Preservation Program **(CAPP)**. We will take the lessons learned, strategize with coalition members and legislative champions, and leverage our collective strength to keep state leaders accountable and advance proven solutions to create a state with homes, health, and wealth for all.

* Source: California Housing Partnership, CALIFORNIA Affordable Housing Needs Report 2022, https://chpc.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/California-Affordable-Housing-Needs-Report-2022.pdf