



CITY COUNCILMEMBER
RIGEL ROBINSON
 DISTRICT 7

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CONSENT CALENDAR
 March 23, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Rigel Robinson (Author), Councilmember Terry Taplin
 (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Kate Harrison (Co-Sponsor)
 Subject: Support for AB 328: Reentry Housing Program

RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter to Assemblymember David Chiu, Senator Nancy Skinner, and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks in support of Assembly Bill 328, which would allow those with recent histories of incarceration to remain stably housed and exit homelessness through grants for evidence-based housing and housing-based services interventions.

BACKGROUND

AB 328, introduced by Assemblymember David Chiu, would redirect annual savings resulting from the closure of California's state prisons to the Reentry Housing Program, providing those with recent histories of incarceration experiencing homelessness with grants for (1) long-term rental assistance in permanent housing, (2) operating subsidies in new or existing affordable or supportive housing units, (3) incentives to landlords, (4) services to assist in accessing permanent supportive housing, and/or (5) operating support for interim interventions. The Legislative Analyst's Office estimates \$1.5 billion in cost reductions by 2025 as a result of inmate population decline that could be repurposed for this program.¹

Existing literature suggests a cyclic relationship between incarceration and homelessness. Formerly incarcerated people, especially women and people of color, are significantly more likely to be unstably housed or homeless; likewise, people experiencing homelessness are more vulnerable to incarceration. This synergy is most pronounced in urban centers and is of particular relevance to the City of Berkeley, which faces a housing crisis and has experienced a recent surge in our homeless population.²

Access to stable housing is critical to successful reentry from carceral institutions, as homelessness is a barrier to healthcare, job security, and educational programs, and is itself effectively a crime in some municipalities due to the criminalization of poverty. It has been demonstrated in multiple studies that homelessness is associated with

¹ [The 2021-22 Budget: State Correctional Population Outlook](#)

² <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep27306.pdf?acceptTC=true&coverpage=false&addFooter=false>
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/p9.pdf>

increased rates of recidivism among formerly incarcerated people and those on parole.³

Evidence shows that supportive housing programs are effective in reducing the likelihood of both re-arrest and housing instability. In 2000, California passed AB 2034 with the intent to house those with serious mental illness, a well-known risk factor for incarceration. Longitudinal evaluation of these programs demonstrated decreased hospitalization and incarceration rates in participants, even in those who had greater barriers to housing stability such as co-occurring substance use disorders.⁴

Despite the success of AB 2034, the nexus of mass incarceration, homelessness, and racial injustice calls for further efforts to support formerly incarcerated individuals in gaining access to stable housing. The Reentry Housing Program is a sustainable criminal justice solution backed by the existing body of evidence in housing-based interventions and the reciprocal relationship between homelessness and incarceration. Therefore, the Berkeley City Council should support AB 328 and send the attached letter of support to Assemblymember David Chiu, Senator Nancy Skinner, and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, (510) 981-7170
Amy Guo, Intern

Attachments:

- 1: Letter of support
- 2: Bill text

http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB328

³ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0011128714555760>

⁴ https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Report_AB20341.pdf

March 23, 2021

The Honorable David Chiu
Assemblymember, 17th District
State Capitol, Room 4112
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: City of Berkeley's Support for Assembly Bill 328

Dear Assemblymember Chiu,

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey our full support for Assembly Bill 328, which would provide much needed housing security services for those with recent histories of incarceration, a population particularly vulnerable to experiencing homelessness.

The cyclic nature of homelessness and incarceration perpetuates many of the racial inequities, mental health concerns, and housing crises we face across the country. While decarcerative initiatives are an important pillar of criminal justice, reducing recidivism rates is critical to the sustainability of such solutions. The Reentry Housing Program is an evidence-based proposal that addresses the need for stable housing as a prerequisite for successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals into society. We believe it is an appropriate repurposing of the savings from the projected closure of our state correctional facilities, and is of particular relevance to the City of Berkeley, which has a growing homeless population.

The Berkeley City Council supports AB 328 and thanks you and the bill's sponsors for taking the lead on this important issue.

Sincerely,

The Berkeley City Council

CC: Senator Nancy Skinner
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks

