



May 23, 2022

The Honorable Senator Susan Rubio
1021 O Street Suite 8710
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 914 (Rubio) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Rubio:

On behalf of the City of Santa Rosa, I am writing to express our support of your bill SB 914. This important legislation will reduce gender bias and disparities in outcomes in California's response to homelessness by embedding a focus on domestic violence survivors and other vulnerable populations into local homelessness plans. Domestic violence is one of the leading drivers of homelessness for women. Nationally, 57 percent of unhoused women reported domestic violence was an immediate cause of their homelessness.ⁱ

The City of Santa Rosa assists our local partners working to support domestic violence survivors and their families and those individuals experiencing homelessness. Each year the City contributes to the YWCA's Safe House shelter to protect these individuals and their families. The Safe House is the only state-designated domestic violence shelter in Sonoma County, and part of the Continuum of Care consortium. The target population is very low-income and extremely low-income families with children and single adults who are homeless victims of domestic violence. In addition to providing shelter, the program includes one-on-one advocacy, support groups, and individual counseling services with the goal of empowering victims with the skills necessary for self-sufficiency and increased safety.

In California, 18 percent of unhoused individuals reported experiencing domestic violence according to the state's Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS) demographic data.ⁱⁱ In FY 19-20, the 102 domestic violence emergency shelter programs in California provided shelter to 18,989 survivors, for a total of 622,646 shelter nights for the survivors and their children.ⁱⁱⁱ The programs serving these survivors are a vital component of our collective response to homelessness in California.

Unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness are unhoused individuals experiencing homelessness without children or dependents in their care.^{iv} Nationally, unaccompanied women comprise nearly one-in-three of all unhoused individuals.^v 44 percent of all unaccompanied women in the United States live in California and make up 40 percent of all unhoused individual Californians. Statewide, unaccompanied women comprise more than double the number of unhoused youth and veterans *combined*, and double that of unhoused families. This population of women endure high rates of first-time homelessness, longer spells of homelessness, and higher barriers in accessing stable housing. Unaccompanied women are also disproportionately women of color, particularly Black women, and they report extremely high incidence of trauma—whether physical, sexual, or psychological in nature—that is compounded by their ongoing houselessness.^{vi}

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Despite making up a significant portion of the homeless population, our state's homelessness response does not appropriately consider the needs of these two intersecting groups. Due to confidentiality requirements for survivors of domestic violence, victim service providers are prohibited by federal law from entering client-level information into the federal Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or the state's HDIS. As a result, data about the number of survivors served, their needs, and program outcomes are not considered when measuring local responses to homelessness.

SB 914 will improve California's response to homelessness by requiring cities, counties, and continuums of care that receive state funding to address homelessness to include domestic violence survivors and unaccompanied women within the vulnerable populations for whom specific system supports are developed. The bill also requires the California Interagency Council on Homelessness to set and measure progress towards goals to prevent and end homelessness for these vulnerable populations.

By ensuring that data about these populations and the work of the relevant service providers is incorporated into local homelessness planning will ensure that our cities, counties, and Continuums of Care have a more complete picture of the homeless population in their community and are better able to achieve results in preventing homelessness and supporting individuals in moving to stable housing. Our housing solutions must be adaptable to the needs of people who have experienced domestic violence. SB 914 (Rubio) will keep California at the forefront of innovative responses to homelessness and domestic violence.

For these reasons we are pleased to support SB 914.

Sincerely,

Chris Rogers
Mayor, City of Santa Rosa

CC: State Senator Mike McGuire
Assemblymember Jim Wood
Assemblymember Marc Levine

ⁱ "Pressing Issues Facing Families Who Are Homeless." The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2013.



ⁱⁱ State of California Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency Homeless Data Information System.

<https://bcsh.ca.gov/calich/hdis.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Grants Management. Joint Legislative Budget Committee Report. April 2021. Available at

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/GrantsManagementSite/Documents/2021%20JLBC%20Report.pdf>

^{iv} USICH, "Expanding the Toolbox: The Whole-of-Government Response to Homelessness," October 2020.

^v The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report – Part 1," January 2021. Available at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

^{vi} 2021 Senate Bill 678. Available at [Bill Text - SB-678 Unaccompanied Women Experiencing Homelessness Act of 2021. \(ca.gov\)](#)