City of
Santa Rosa

May 3, 2016

The Honorable Mark Leno
State Senator
State Capitol, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA   95814

RE: Support – SB 1053 (Leno): Housing Opportunities Act

Dear Senator Leno:

I am writing to express support for SB 1053, which would amend the Fair Employment and Housing Act to clarify that housing subsidies are a protected source of income. SB 1053 will provide all Californians with a full and fair opportunity to seek housing by ensuring that landlords cannot deny applicants simply because they receive rental assistance.

The City of Santa Rosa Housing Authority (SRHA) has a robust, high-performing Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program that includes 365 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers. Despite the positive relationships that SRHA has with over 700 landlords in our community, voucher holders struggle to find housing in an increasingly competitive rental market. Many property owners refuse to consider tenants holding Housing Choice Vouchers, trouncing upon the core value of the program to give low-income families the choice to find housing that best meets their needs.

Vouchers are not considered a protected source of income under FEHA; therefore, landlords may freely deny housing to otherwise qualified voucher holders. These practices, which occur in jurisdictions throughout the state, harm tenants, impair the ability of local Housing Authorities to perform their functions, and exacerbate the already severe housing crisis in California.

At least nine other states, including New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Oregon, have taken a stand for housing opportunity by clarifying that housing subsidies are a protected source of income. It is time for California to join their ranks.

Sincerely,

JOHN SAWYER
Mayor

JS/sk

JOHN SAWYER
Mayor

TOM SCHWEDHELM
Vice Mayor

ERIN CARLSTROM
JULIE COMBS
CHRIS COURSEY
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