

ADD YOUR ORG LETTERHEAD

Assemblymember Reginald Jones-Sawyer
Chair, Public Safety Committee
1020 N St, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

DATE

Re: AB 257 (HOOVER) - OPPOSE

On behalf of **[NAME OF ORGANIZATION]**, I am writing in opposition to AB 257 (Hoover). **[ONE TO TWO SENTENCES ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION]**

AB 257 seeks to further criminalize the very existence of our unhoused neighbors in public space. AB 257 would make it a crime to “camp” on any street, sidewalk, or other public right-of-way within 500 feet of a school, daycare center, playground, or youth center. Despite recent amendments which slightly narrow the scope of the bill, we remain gravely concerned that AB 257 would further demonize, destabilize, criminalize, and violate the human rights of unhoused Californians while failing to address the underlying driver of homelessness: the lack of affordable and accessible housing to Californians with the lowest incomes.

AB 257 would effectively make it a crime for Californians who lack safe and stable housing to exist in [vast swaths](#) of public space, and perpetuate a “policing-first” approach to addressing homelessness. The criminal penalties associated with violations of this law would also create barriers for unhoused Californians to secure housing, making it harder for them to exit homelessness. Further, given the fact that Black people and other people of color [disproportionately live without housing or shelter](#) and are unjustly targeted by law enforcement, AB 257 also reinforces dangerous racialized stereotypes that continue to reproduce systemic inequity in housing, health, employment, and legal outcomes.

Only housing ends homelessness, and at present, California is experiencing a housing affordability crisis decades in the making, with a statewide shortage of [1.2 million affordable homes](#). Without housing options, criminalizing basic activities of living cannot solve homelessness and may make it worse. As shown by recent [research](#) and [reporting](#) from across the state, sweeping encampments and criminalizing unhoused people with nowhere else to go is traumatic, destabilizing, [costly](#), and [ineffective](#). Further, courts have established that criminalizing unhoused people because they are homeless violates their constitutional and civil rights.

Rather than expand laws that criminalize homelessness, we urge the legislature to instead continue to pursue policies that deliver on our neighbors’ basic health and housing needs, including through budget investments in supportive and affordable housing, service provider outreach, community-based mental health and substance use treatment services to support our unhoused neighbors in connecting to the housing and care they want and need.

Signed

{ADD AN IMAGE OF THE SIGNATURE OF THE PERSON SIGNING

Name

Title}