



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

Board of Supervisors

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April 14, 2023

The Honorable Scott Wiener
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Re: Senate Bill 18 – Tribal Housing Reconstitution and Resiliency Act - Support

Dear Senator Wiener:

Mendocino County writes in support of Senate Bill (SB) 18, the Tribal Housing Reconstitution and Resiliency Act. Modeled after federal Indian Housing programs and State programs like the Joe Serna, Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant Program, the Tribal Housing Reconstitution and Resiliency Act would create a first-ever Tribal Housing Grant Program. It will be administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development and will provide equitable access to financing so Tribes can provide decent, affordable, and sustainable homes for low- and moderate-income tribal members and non-Native employees of tribal governments in a manner that respects Tribal sovereignty and cultural heritage.

Since becoming a state in 1850, California has had a long history of State-sponsored genocide, land theft, displacement, and marginalization of its Native population. This history is a direct cause of the poor living conditions and underdevelopment faced by most Tribal communities to this day. Tribes have the highest rates of poverty, substandard and overcrowded homes, homelessness, and failing or nonexistent infrastructure of any population in the state.

According to the Corporation for Supportive Housing's California Homeless Housing Needs Assessment, homelessness among Indigenous people is up to double that of the general population. For example, Lake County's 2021 point-in-time count found 50.8% of unsheltered people were Indigenous (123 out of 242 persons). Census data also show that Tribes are disproportionately represented among the state's unhoused.

Existing State housing and community development programs, despite recent Tribal set-asides, have failed to address these needs. Most Tribes do not apply because applications are onerous,

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and they cannot dedicate the upfront staff and funds required. Only about 13 of the 109 federally recognized Tribes in California have succeeded, mostly larger Tribes with funds for full-time housing staff and expensive consultants. Existing programs also conflict with Tribal sovereignty, laws, and culture, which necessitates requests for time-consuming waivers from program rules. In other words, these programs simply don't fit Tribal needs and conditions.

The Tribal Housing Reconstitution and Resiliency Act is designed by Tribes for Tribes. In other words, it does not try to impose a non-Native model of housing and community development on Indian lands. This isn't another state program; it's a step towards restorative justice for Tribal Californians, rectifying historic displacement from ancestral lands, and providing Tribes with a flexible and comprehensive resource to meet their housing and community needs.

California's Tribal communities have been left out of the conversation around housing for too long and SB 18 is a great start toward helping Tribes reach parity when it comes to these issues. Thank you for your leadership on these critical housing and homelessness issues and for all these reasons, we support this bill.

Respectfully,



Glenn McGourty, Chair
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

cc: The Honorable Mike McGuire, Member, California State Senate
Iliana Chevez, CCRH Tribal Technical Assistance Programs Manager