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STREET SHEET

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CA THREATENS TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK ON MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Alex V Barnard

When it was passed in 1967, California's Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act—which sets the legal requirements for involuntary commitments to psychiatric hospitals—was hailed as the “Magna Carta of the mentally ill.” The new rights and legal protections it created helped make California a leader in the deinstitutionalization of people living with mental illnesses. Now, the state is considering swinging the pendulum back towards custodial care. It should not turn back the clock lightly.

If “5150s”—the 72-hour holds that police or medical professionals can use to obligate someone deemed a risk to themselves or others to go to an emergency room for evaluation—have entered the popular lexicon, the proposed change concerns a much less known provision of LPS, “conservatorships.” Currently, if someone is hospitalized for a 72-hour 5150 and then a 14-day 5250, but remains unstable, an inpatient doctor can petition the court to allow them to keep a person longer. A court then determines whether the person is “gravely disabled”, that is, unable to meet their needs for food, clothing, or shelter.

According to state data, less than 2% of 5150s turn into conservatorships—for good reason. Once a conservator—usually a social worker in the county Department of Behavioral Health or Adult Services—is appointed, the conservator is able to determine where a person lives, to consent to have that person medicated, and to choose how their income (usually a social security check) gets spent. Most people under conservatorship are at least initially placed in a locked facility.

You would think that such a serious restriction of someone's civil rights would be sharply scrutinized, but conservatorship has been a largely invisible part of the state's mental health system. That is, until Senator Scott Wiener introduced SB 1045. The bill, signed by Governor Brown in October, would allow San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego to broaden the criteria of conservatorship to include homeless individuals with co-occurring substance

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SHELTER WAITLIST UPDATE: As of February 1st there are **1,196** people on the waitlist for shelter in San Francisco.

NEWSFLASH

HOMELESSNESS HEADLINES YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

NEW BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT EXPANDS WAR ON THE POOR

On Tuesday, February 5th, the Board of Supervisors will vote on a resolution declaring the intention to establish a property-based business improvement district known as the “SoMa West Community Benefit District” and levy a multi-year assessment on all parcels in the district. This would allow private businesses to create a governing body that would likely be involved in policing the use of the space especially by poor and homeless folks.

SUPERVISOR MATT HANEY CALLS FOR PUBLIC HEARING ON EMERGENCY WEATHER SHELTER

District 6 Supervisor Matt Haney called for a public hearing to discuss San Francisco’s emergency response to homeless people who need shelter during “extreme weather.” He said he was shocked that the city had such limited resources available during the brutal storms at the end of January after the city offered a mere 25 mats for the thousands of people out on the street.

MY PROVERBIAL PROVACATIVE MIND OF STATE

Georgia

Ducts of pain that laid so far beneath the surface of my skin as I’d make up my face and embrace what dwelled within..

I fear no more, I am healed,
without no pain, no gain,
Yes I acted up. Turn Down for What?
But Im no longer ashamed, No more self infliction...
Unanswered questions
I found peace, it’s what I maintain

I heard every lash of them tongues
Lashes on and behind my back
From your lashes right to my face
to tears through the ones I glam on
to stay in tact...

Smiling into faces of those I thought I know...those who I loved and trusted my deepest secrets to...
My fear and insecurities, those who know my truth.
So called friends even family, those who look like you.
And you...
And yes you too!

You helped me appreciate this journey and every step that I took
While walking up to the mirror struggling to take an honest look...

Falling...Falling within myself only to learn how to levitate...
How to breathe New Life...How to spiritually procreate.

A Self-Mastered powerful, yet fierce epitome of the universe
Extracted from the womb of my soul I went through trauma while at my worst...

Resurrecting the Goddess inside...I’ve been called and I’ve arrived.
Stabbing my Anhk into this Bitch parting the truth from all your lies. For forgiveness mercy and grace and for what it’s worth I apologize
Or softly whisper from my lips releasing nightmare lullabies.

This fire will burn, heal, infect and even intoxicate. Soothe yourself, stay awake,
take a sip, have a taste...
I’m only getting started...
With my rare, provocative,
proverbial mind of state.

ASK US ANYTHING

HAVE A QUESTION YOU WANT US TO ANSWER ABOUT HOMELESSNESS OR HOUSING IN THE BAY AREA? ASK US AT STREETSHEET@COHSF.ORG OR (415) 346-3740 AND IT COULD BE ANSWERED IN THE NEXT ISSUE!

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agenda to us.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP

Every Tuesday at noon
The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP

Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.
The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join!

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO OUR WORK GROUP MEETINGS. Unfortunately our space is not wheelchair accessible, but we will move our meeting location to accomodate people who cannot make it up the stairs. For access needs contact development@cohsf.org

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

PHOTOGRAPHERS
VIDEOGRAPHERS
TRANSLATORS
COMIC ARTISTS
WEBSITE MAINTENANCE
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS
WRITERS & COPYEDITORS

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CONTACT:

STREETSHEET@COHSF.ORG

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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SUBMIT YOUR WRITING

STREET SHEET publishes news and perspective stories about poverty and homelessness. We prioritize submissions from currently or formerly homeless writers but gratefully accept all submissions.

send submission to qwatts@cohsf.org

REVISITING CALIFORNIA'S 2018 HOUSING PROGRESS

Nick Fish

In January 2018, far reaching assembly bill 1506 progressed as the latest attempt by assembly member Richard Bloom of Santa Monica. Along with his peers, Bloom has vehemently committed himself to repealing the Costa-Hawkins Act of 1995, which he believes has strangled California's housing stock for over two decades.

In a less than dramatic outcome, it lacked support to push through the first hearing. Republican Caucus members Steven Choi and Marc Steinorth opposed the measure, and have been vocal critics for some time. Only one supportive vote short, the bill would have likely made it through committee had Ed Chau and Jim Wood of the Democratic Caucus chosen to participate.

This decision, like many before it, come at odds with the realities of living in a state that has long favored homeowners and branded itself as one of the countries least affordable places to live. The tradition to protect profits over livelihood, even if the commodity is a necessity for survival, has perpetuated preexisting exclusionary practices specifically aimed at working class and people of color.

The historical struggle of housing insecurity seems only to slow during periods of increased regulation or financial downturn, suggesting a strong relationship between investment practices and market inflation. In fact, there have been more successful efforts at stripping tenant security than at strengthening, continuing to fuel housing woes.

Large-scale natural disasters further typecast California landlords as obstinate to compromise for the common good. Chico's North Valley Property Owners Association, which opposed a temporary rent control ordinance to protect displaced victims of some 14,000 homes lost in Paradise, proved themselves tone deaf to their neighbor's cries for compassion. The turmoil of those at risk of eviction or displacement are evidently dependent on the unscrupulous property management practices of landlordism and speculative developers alike, not underperforming market production.

Exemplary of this, housing oppression over the years has risen to unprecedented levels as homelessness and eviction rates skyrocket, becoming the most pressing public health

crisis to date. With a statewide homeless population nearly the size of Pasadena, urban parks and underpasses have been informally subdivided at alarming rates as homeless encampments sprout to accommodate market failures.

The lack of affordability associated in cosmopolitan cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles inevitably spilled out into public discussion as an omnipresent multi-regional issue. There is no argument that homelessness is a problem that must be stopped. But, depending on who you talk to, homelessness is either a crime or a symptom of something much more inauspicious. This lack of continuity renders litigation at a standstill. To the housing activist and academic world, Bloom's efforts presumed to die a quiet death by the hand of real estate cronies, as the nature of our political climate prevents housing from being both affordable and a lucrative investment.

In many ways 2018 acted as a tipping point in the war on classist housing policy. Almost immediately after the demise of Bloom's AB 1506, grassroots movements began collecting signatures in an all out effort to breathe life into more aggressive repeal efforts during the midterm elections. Within months, Prop 10 collected nearly 600,000 signatures, establishing itself as a mainstream movement that breaks away from the orthodoxies of repressive housing policy.

With this growing legitimacy, threats and misinformation spread pervasively as desperate efforts to shoot down the tentative legislation. Totaling in over \$74 million, opposition to Prop 10 was primarily funded through wealthy developers and real estate investors. Under the veil 'No on Prop 10; Californians for Responsible Housing, a Coalition of Veterans, Seniors, Affordable Housing Providers, Social Justice Groups, Taxpayer Associations, and Labor; Sponsored by the California Apartment Association', lewd claims that the bill would hurt communities of color, veterans, and aging communities were used to leverage the very emotions that would inspire support. This deceitful mimicry undermined informed political participation, the very justification for the existence of democracy.

If one thing is certain, Prop 10 was not a failure in the traditional sense. Although it did not pass, a formal foundation for meaningful change

has been set for the future. Similar to the growth of Democratic Socialism in the 2016 primaries, conventional politics gave way to pragmatic non-partisan demands which have empowered working class suffrage on the left as well as the right.

Mainstream support from the City of San Francisco, California's Democratic Party, Nurse's Association, Alliance of Retired Americans, and the AIDS Healthcare Foundation have enriched the fight to regain local authority over housing. Groups like Tenants Together, San Francisco's Tenants Union, Sacramento Tenants Union, and the Los Angeles Tenants Union have gained an immense presence on social media and in local participation.

2018 may have been the year Californians lost the housing rights battle, but they have not lost the war. Los Angeles County was able to pass a rental freeze ordinance, which temporarily protects unincorporated areas without any existing rent control. In Sacramento, a measure was placed on the midterm ballot to immediately regulate rental increases in the instance that Prop 10 were to have passed.

The undeniable truth is that change is coming. It is very clear that the overwhelming need to protect renters has the wealthiest in this state shaking in their boots. If the best tactic to keep rent control off ballots is to confuse voters, there will come a time when this will no longer work. With renters now making up the majority in most California cities, there are far more in the housing liberation movement than there are in positions of power. Their fear is justified, it is only a matter of time.■

If you or someone you know wishes to get involved in local efforts to increase tenant protections, or needs supportive services due to housing related hardships, the list below are some of the most active tenants rights organizations in the state:

Tenants Together
474 Valencia St #156,
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 495-8100

San Francisco Tenants Union
558 Capp St,
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 282-6622

Coalition On Homelessness
468 Turk St,
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 346-3740

Oakland Tenants Union
(510) 704-5276

Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness
1331 Garden Hwy #100,
Sacramento, CA 95833
(916) 889-4367

Sacramento Tenants Union
530-564-6245

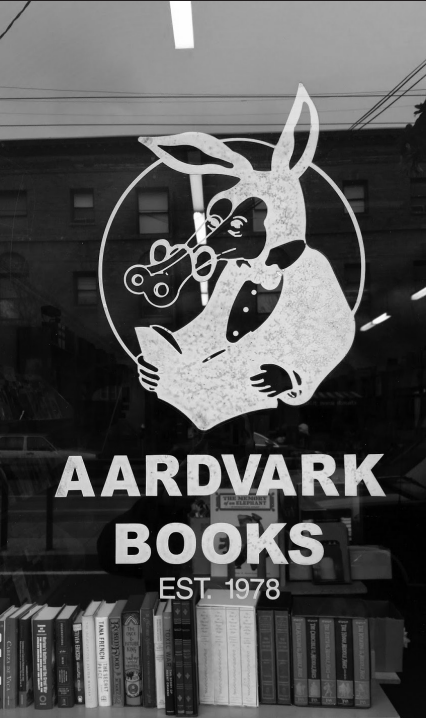
Los Angeles Tenants Union
(213) 986-8266

California Coalition For Rural Housing
717 K St #400,
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 443-4448

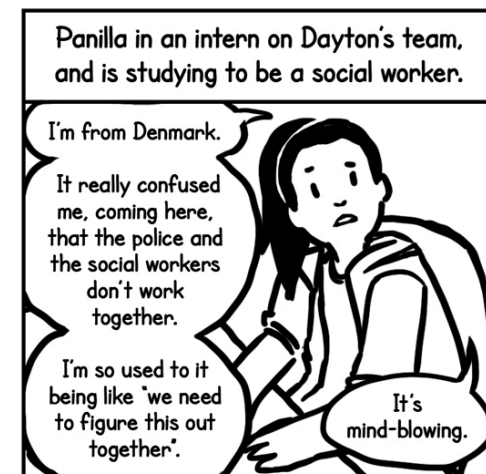
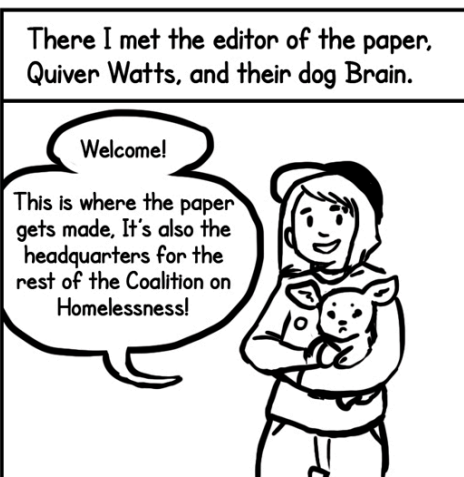
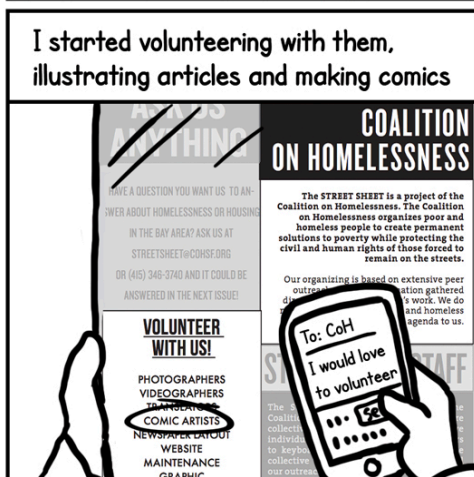
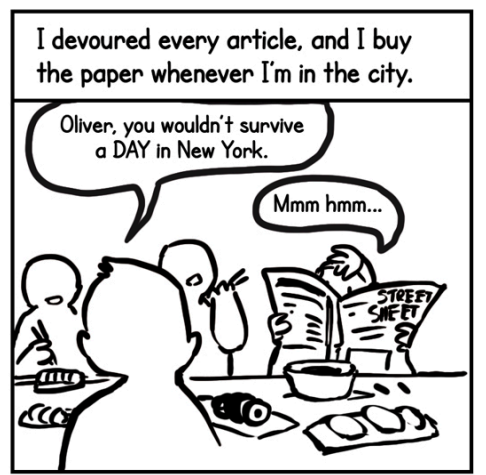
OBITUARY: CELEBRATING AARDVARK BOOKS

Derek Williams One would notice Aardvark's on a late afternoon jaunt down Church St at the edge of the Castro District right before one enters the Financial District, or downtown as it is more popularly known. According to a worker whom I spoke with, there will always be people that want to read and there will always be people that want to write. But he said that sci-fi has gained much more mainstream appeal since the 1970's, and that before Star Wars came out sci-fi readership was limited to scientists and seventh graders. Aardvarks was too crowded to host shows, or the store would have loved to try that.

Aardvark Books shut it's doors for good on January 25th, after serving the community for 40 years. ■



A DAY AT THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS



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A LIBRARY FOR ALL SAN FRANCISCANS

Many of us have experienced that sinking feeling- the library book you checked out several weeks ago might be overdue, racking up late fines every day. But for those who can't afford to pay the fines, the sinking feeling becomes worse: they can become blocked from accessing the library.

On January 17th, the San Francisco Public Library Commission voted to eliminate fines on overdue materials. The vote followed testimony from San Francisco residents and librarians in response to a report released by The Financial Justice Project and

the Library titled "Long Overdue: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library."

Through interviews with librarians across the country, surveys of library staff and patrons, and analysis of library data, the report finds that:

- Overdue fines disproportionately impact low-income people, African American communities, and San Franciscans without college degrees. Library patrons across the city - regardless

HOMELESSNESS

Oliver Northwood

Miguel has been working with CoH for 20 years. He used to be homeless.

I believe that outreach is the main tool in this organization.

This is the only way we can communicate with the homeless people of the city.

We want to know what's going on in their lives, and have them report to us and let us know how we can solve their problems, together.

He's intimately familiar with the hardships of not having a bed, a roof.

Some of these shelters don't have usable bathrooms or showers.

Their 'mattresses' on the floor flatten to nothing when they lay down, so mothers are suffering from back pain.

Drop-in shelters provide some relief from the street, but don't have beds.

This 'women's' drop-in shelter has people from 40s to 80 years old, with all kinds of physical and mental disabilities, and they have to sleep in a chair.

And the chair is shit.

Imagine they put your ass in a fucking metal chair from 6pm to 6am.

If a family is lucky enough to get into a shelter, it often still isn't enough.

There are families that walk from their shelter to the drop-in center at 6am so their kids can shower before school. If they don't, their classmates bully them for being homeless and poor.

Winter mornings are friggin dark and cold. It makes it even harder.

It's easy for the kids to end up sick all the time and doing bad in school.

Living on the street is really hard when you have PTSD.

Pretty much everyone in the homeless population has PTSD on some other kind of disability.

We have disabilities because we have long histories,

but when we become homeless it makes it worse.

It's worse because when you're on the street you're steeped so deeply in instability.

It makes it so easy to start using heavy drugs, to keep yourself calm, to self-medicate.

Because you've been living through so many traumatic things in your life, it becomes really hard to understand what you're doing, because we start acting like a little baby.

If someone is coming and asking you to do things, you don't do shit because you don't have consciousness at the moment.

The solution to this problem is housing: the most basic human need.

Housing puts people the path to recovery.

The first thing you see: their self-esteem comes up.

They feel honour from having a place they can call a home.

Food is easier.

The more important thing is the roof.

A mattress, a sanctuary.

With housing, you can do so many things.

Miguel lit up when he explained how CoH's efforts were paying off.

We're working on getting on getting a new shelter.

We got the money.

We worked so hard, we fought so hard, and we secured the money.

Miguel left to join his outreach group. I thanked him for his time & work.

Remember to vote!

I said goodbye to the kind folks at CoH and left to head to school.

Coalition on Homelessness

Hello!

I left full of hope, and with renewed vigour in solving homelessness.

Oh! Hi!

Could I buy a paper?

Yeah, for sure!

The Coalition on Homelessness is tackling an issue that hurts all of us.

The solution is surprisingly obvious: HOMES.

Excuse me-

They have solid, smart plans to make this happen. They need your help.

We can choose to live in a world where everyone has a roof, a bed.

A chance.

A life.

of income - miss return deadlines at similar rates. However, patrons in low-income areas face much more difficulty in paying the fines associated with overdue items. As a result, overdue fines can widen existing inequalities: 11.2 percent of Bayview's adult cardholders are blocked from accessing library materials, more than three times as many as in high-income locations. Across the city, branches that serve lower-income populations have a greater share of blocked patrons.

Overdue fines are not an

effective tool to encourage returns. None of the libraries across the country that have eliminated overdue fines have experienced increases in late returns, longer hold times, or gaps in collections. In fact, some libraries saw their late-return rates drop following fine elimination. While overdue fines will be eliminated, patrons that do not return their books will still need to either replace, or pay for the value of, any materials that are not returned.

Research shows there are more effective tools to encourage

people to return books. The report recommends several administrative changes to help increase the library's return rate, including sending out more reminders, and shortening the time frame before a book needs to be replaced or paid for.

Eliminating overdue fines will increase access to the library. Once someone starts accruing overdue fines, their account can be blocked, restricting them from checking out library materials. Approximately 5% of all library cardholders have their cards blocked exclusively due to

overdue fines.

The proposal will go to the Board of Supervisors next for a vote, likely as part of the June budget process. The recommended reform endorsed by Mayor London Breed, who said: "As a City, we need to make sure that we are not placing unnecessary burdens on people to access our public resources. In this case, the fines and fees are overwhelmingly affecting people in our community from disadvantaged backgrounds, which undermines the goal of the Library and reinforces inequality in our City." ■

IT'S A BIG DEAL: NEWSOM'S HOUSING BUDGET, EXPLAINED

Matt Levin

Originally published by CALmatters

No wonder Gov. Gavin Newsom dropped those hints earlier this week about an upcoming “Marshall Plan” for affordable housing.

Sure, he’d made ambitious campaign promises to combat California’s housing crisis: leading the effort to build 3.5 million units over the next seven years (an unprecedented rate), jacking up state subsidies for housing reserved for lower-income Californians, and easing regulations so it would be easier to build all types of new housing. But what would he deliver?

We got the first glimpses of his plans today, as Newsom unveiled his first governor’s budget. And yeah, it’s a big deal.

For those not intimately aware of the chronology of the state’s fiscal planning process (I’m jealous of you), please remember that these are just proposals. The Legislature may tweak, change, expand or kill many of these.

Still, they give you a good idea of Newsom’s priorities to combat what he has called “the issue when it comes to California poverty.”

Here are the key takeaways from Newsom’s first major housing proposals.

- Housing’s not taking a back seat to other priorities.
- Housing advocates frequently criticized former Gov. Jerry Brown for placing the issue on the back burner while focusing on the state’s fiscal health and other priorities like climate change.
- No one will accuse Newsom of doing the same.

From major funding increases for affordable housing, to his threat to take away any city’s transportation dollars if it doesn’t meet its housing quota, Newsom’s plans match the audacious ambitions he outlined in the campaign.

“We are not playing small ball with housing,” said Newsom.

Not that his plan includes everything (more on that later), but collectively Newsom’s proposals reveal that housing and homelessness will be at the forefront of his legislative agenda, and will not take a backseat to other campaign promises such as universal health care or early childhood education. At least not yet.

No governor in recent memory has proposed this big a budget boost for housing and homelessness

It takes a lot of money to build housing reserved for lower-income Californians—roughly \$330,000 per unit, by one estimate. Affordable housing and homelessness advocates have been complaining for years that they are receiving nowhere near the level of financial support they need from the state.

Newsom’s budget proposals include a major infusion of more than \$2 billion in one-time and ongoing affordable housing cash. That includes:

- \$500 million in one-time cash for local governments to combat homelessness—of that \$300 million will go towards regional planning, and \$200 million as awards for cities that build new shelters or permanent supportive housing
- A quintupling of ongoing cash (from \$80 million to \$500 million) for the state’s most important low-income housing financing tool, the low-income housing tax credit
- \$500 million in one-time cash for “moderate-income” housing production, or the so-called “missing middle” of housing for California’s middle class; Newsom said he has also urged Silicon Valley firms to match this funding
- \$25 million to get more homeless Californians on federal disability programs

“I have never seen this kind of attention paid in the budget to homelessness and affordable housing issues,” said Anya Lawler, a housing policy advocate for the Western Center on Law and Poverty. “Just the page count alone

is a little unprecedented.”

Newsom also said he would appoint a new homelessness czar in the next few days to help coordinate state, regional and local initiatives. Included in the budget is a policy tweak that would allow new homeless shelters to avoid prolonged environmental reviews—a regulatory hurdle that often holds up new housing plans.

Affordable housing advocates caution that they’re waiting to see details—especially how much will actually go towards the production of new housing.

Newsom threatened cities that aren’t building enough housing—and cities are nervous

Cities and the NIMBY homeowners who populate them are often blamed as the biggest obstacle to producing more low-income and market-rate housing.

To incentivize cities to approve more projects, Newsom has proposed \$500 million in awards to cities and counties that meet new, short-term housing goals.

The housing quotas assigned to local governments are often laughably flawed. Beverly Hills, for example, met its state-mandate affordable housing target last year with three measly low-income units.

Newsom wants to revamp the whole housing-goal setting process. Statewide, the goals are are going to bigger than what they used to be.

That \$500 million is the carrot, and most cities are eager to revamp the seemingly senseless way in which they’re assigned housing quotas. But along with that carrot could be a thorny stick.

Newsom proposes taking away transportation funding—including revenue generated by the recently enacted gas tax—from cities that fail to meet longer-term housing goals.

Cities are not happy. They say much of housing production is out of their control, and dependent on market conditions and developer proclivities.

“You can’t set a goal that’s not achievable, and then penalize us

with transportation dollars that aren’t there,” said Jason Rhine, assistant legislative director for the League of California Cities.

Left unmentioned: rent control, zoning reform, and that pesky ‘3.5 million units’ promise

One number that didn’t make its way into Newsom’s first budget: 3.5 million. That’s how many new homes he has pledged California will build under his watch—a number that most housing experts say is unrealistic. The Newsom administration did not publicly estimate how many new units his new proposals would generate—perhaps an indication that the new governor is distancing himself from the figure.

Also missing from the budget or the governor’s comments: any reference to rent control or stronger tenant protections, despite his earlier pledge that he would try to broker a compromise. In fairness, the budget unveiling might not be the appropriate venue to talk about that. But a source briefed on the budget said that while Newsom’s team expressed enthusiasm for legislators to take up rent control, they weren’t leading on the issue.

Newsom may be taking a wait-and-see approach on the most controversial piece of housing legislation he’ll encounter this year: an attempt to force cities to allow apartment buildings to be built around transit stops. San Francisco Democratic state Sen. Scott Wiener’s second attempt at “zoning reform”—which would strip cities of their ability to block denser housing in areas previously reserved for single family homes—will need Newsom’s support to actually become law.

When asked about Wiener’s new legislation, Newsom said he hadn’t read it yet—the same response he gave to questions about last year’s bill during the campaign. But he did say he “appreciates the spirit” of the bill. ■

CALmatters.org is a nonprofit, nonpartisan media venture explaining California policies and politics.

SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

FEB
6

ASK CITY HALL TO USE WINDFALL FUNDING FOR HOUSING&HOMELESSNESS

WHERE: CITY HALL RM 205 @10AM
The City recently discovered that they had extra funding (\$185 Million!) from the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund. Join the Our City Our Home Coalition and ask the City's Budget & Finance Committee to use some of this windfall funding to go towards housing and homelessness!
ACCESS: City Hall is wheelchair accessible

FEB
7

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION HEARING

WHERE: CITY HALL @10AM
Support the legislation we've written to create an oversight committee to administer the funds generated by Prop C and make sure that money goes to genuinely create housing for homeless folks
ACCESS: City Hall is wheelchair accessible

FEB
7

MONSTER IN THE MISSION - PUBLIC HEARING / AUDIENCIA PUBLICA

WHERE: MISSION HIGH SCHOOL
3750 18TH ST @3-8PM
Join us and have the opportunity to speak directly to the Planning Commission and demand that they make the right choice and take a stand against the Monster in the Mission and support the 100% community developed affordable housing!
ACCESS: Childcare, food, and interpretation will be available

FEB
10

COH ANNUAL SALSA FUNDRAISER

WHERE: EL RIO, 3158 MISSION ST @3-8PM
Bring your friends down to El Rio and mention the Coalition on Homelessness to raise money for your favorite tireless community organization!!
ACCESS: TICKETS AT DOOR- CASH ONLY \$8 (3-4pm) & \$10 (4-8pm). El Rio is wheelchair accessible but bathrooms and walkways are difficult to navigate.

SALSA SUNDAY

DANCE + RAISE MONEY FOR THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

@ EL RIO

3158 MISSION ST., SF

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10
FROM 3PM TO 8PM

\$10 (\$8 BEFORE 4PM)
CASH ONLY / 21+

Wheelchair accessible space; Bathrooms accessible with assistance; No smoking/vaping permitted; Earplugs available from bar; Service animals welcome; Outside food welcome; Hydration stations available. More accessibility & space info at www.elriosf.com/about

The Threat of Expanding Conservatorship

Alex V Barnard

continued from page 1...
abuse and mental disorders and who use a high volume of emergency services, as marked by eight 5150s in the last year.

Wiener heralded the bill as a means of “getting people off our streets and into housing and services that will help them get healthy.” It’s not clear why Wiener is confident that expanding conservatorship will help people “get healthy”, because the state collects no data on who goes into conservatorship or what the outcomes are. What I have learned as part of a research project interviewing conservators around the state is that most think that conservatorship is an extreme measure that should be reserved for the sickest of the sick, which is why many are concerned about the idea of expanding it.

In fact, SB 1045 seems to be, on many levels, mis-diagnosing the problem. The number of people conserved in California has fallen by two-thirds since the 1990s. The reason is not renegade civil rights lawyers or judges applying the standard of “grave disability” so

strictly as to leave people dying in the street. Rather, conservatorship faces the same problem as everything else in our mental health system: insufficient funds. As hospital beds and supervised Board and Care facilities around the state have closed, counties have run out of places to put conserved clients. SB 1045 comes with no new funds for services, so it’s not clear how it would reverse this decline.

There are other reasons to be concerned about expanding conservatorships. Those who are conserved—especially in the most urban and the most rural counties—are often sent to other, far from their friends or family, that have more and cheaper facilities. There is no statewide agency that regulates the use of conservatorship, so that role falls to the courts. But in conversations with public defenders assigned to represent conserved clients—who, like conservators themselves, are working mightily with limited resources to help extremely vulnerable people—I have heard ongoing skepticism about the effectiveness of legal protections.

One 2009 study found that, in 298 conservatorship hearings, the judge only ruled against establishing conservatorship in one case.

Advocates are rightly worried that SB 1045 will siphon funds away from voluntary and community-based services. The law does require that cities establish that “no voluntary mental health programs... may be reduced as a result of the implementation” of the bill. But San Francisco’s claim that this is the case is non-sensical. If the people targeted for expanded conservatorship—which it says number between 55 and 103—jump to the front of the queue for scarce places in permanent supportive housing, others who are trying to access housing are, obviously, bumped back. There are already two referrals for every one place available in intensive case management; the San Francisco Auditor found that, in one month, 35 people in San Francisco were referred to long-term locked facilities. Every single one only found a place on a waitlist.

In 1955 there were 550,000 people institutionalized in state hospitals;

today, there are fewer than 10% that many. It’s unlikely that California will invest the billions of dollars necessary to once again hide the homeless and incarcerated mentally ill behind hospital walls. But with counties from Sonoma to San Diego flirting with building new psychiatric inpatient beds, the risk of a turn back towards forced care is real.

People rightly want to see changes to California’s mental health system, particularly to meet the needs of individuals whose severe, co-occurring mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders are aggravated by our collective failure to provide them a dignified and stable place to live. But attacking the LPS Act for going too far misses that the system that the signers of this “Magna Carta” was never built. A comprehensive system of voluntary, culturally-competent, and comprehensive services has never existed; it’s a bit premature to abandon a vision that’s never been seriously tried. ■

ASK CITY HALL TO USE WINDFALL FUNDING FOR HOUSING &

In yet another magical moment in a string of magical moments since we began our journey to pass Our City Our Home (OCOH), the revenue measure that doubles the city’s homeless efforts, the city received \$415 million in unanticipated revenue. This was two years’ worth of Educational Revenue Augmentation fund or ERAF, which is basically excess property tax that goes to the state and back to us.

The Our City Our Home Coalition is recommending that \$171.4 million of that go to properly begin implementing November 2018’s Prop C “Our City Our Home,” which passed with over 60% approval, but is held up in court.

This windfall is poised to fund numerous “shovel ready” projects and begin tackling the homelessness crisis this year. \$171.4 million provides 875 homeless housing units, 340 shelter beds, behavioral health services for 397 individuals, and homeless prevention services for 3,100 households. In line with Prop C, the OCOH Coalition is calling for 20% of housing to go to youth and 25% to go to families, through both 100% homeless housing and set-aside units in affordable housing buildings. San Francisco and its residents suffering on our streets cannot afford to wait until the lawsuit is settled.

Expand Funding to meet City needs: The Our City Our Home Coalition strongly recommends the City of San Francisco “grow the pot” of available revenue to fund homelessness services as well as other pressing civic

needs. This could be accomplished through funding sources listed below:

Current ERAF Funding	\$185,000,000
One Time Rainy Day Fund	\$52,000,000
FY 16/17 ERAF discretionary +rainy	\$56,000,000
FY 19/20 ERAF discretionary +rainy	\$112,000,000
Total	\$405,000,000

The Proposals: There are two proposals before the Board of Supervisors – one from Mayor and the other from Supervisor Peskin. Both have matching funding for homelessness, except Peskin’s does not have funding for bathrooms, and his homeless proposals are for two years funding while Mayor Breeds are for four years. However, neither of the proposals fund solutions for homeless families or youth, nor do they have funding for community mental health or prevention of homelessness. The proposals are also leaving money on the table. Neither fully take advantage of funding sources listed above – Supervisor Peskin’s proposal is about \$10 million more than Mayor Breed’s, but still leaves \$40 million in new rainy day funds on the table. The Peskin Proposal also has funding for childcare, teachers and PG&E power plant acquisition, while the Mayor’s does not. We have been resisting being pitted against these other needs – calling for prioritization of homeless funding and asking the city to “grow the pot” to meet other needs. ■

JOIN THE OUR CITY OUR HOME COALITION

HOMELESSNESS!

wednesday at 10am
02. 06. 2019



CITY HALL RM 250

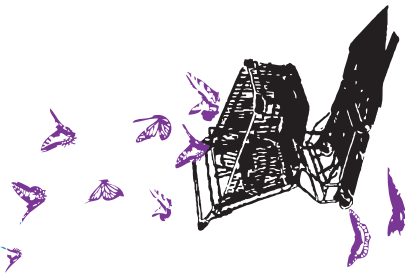
LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Coalition on
Homelessness
San Francisco

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS IS HIRING!

We are currently hiring for our Human Rights Organizer position. The workgroup works to defend the human rights of homeless people, primarily those who are forced to live on the streets and in shelters.

For more information about the position and the requirements, visit <http://www.cohsf.org/get-involved/work-with-us/>

Preference will be given to San Francisco residents who have personally experienced poverty and homelessness. People of color and others who have experienced social oppression encouraged to apply.

If interested please send resume and cover letter to jfriedenbach@cohsf.org by Wednesday Feb 13th.

