



Hollywood Property Owners Alliance
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March 27, 2015

Senator Jim Beall, Chair
Senate Transportation and Housing Committee
State Capitol Room 5066
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: Opposition to SB 608 (Liu) Right to Rest Act

Dear Senator Beall,

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors for the Hollywood Property Owners Alliance, a nonprofit organization which manages the Hollywood Entertainment District BID. This district incorporates historic Hollywood and represents over 500 property and condo owners. We are asking you and the members of the Transportation and Housing Committee to vote no on SB 608 (Liu), the "Right to Rest Act."

Our nonprofit organization has been in existence since 1996 and has played a significant role in the revitalization of downtown Hollywood, a neighborhood which had fallen into blight and despair after decades of abandonment. We have played a key role in forming proactive coalitions to help our homeless neighbors move off the streets and into housing, and passage of a bill such as this turns the clock back to a 1990's strategy for addressing homelessness.

There are six reasons why our organization opposes this bill and are concerned about the unintended consequences of something that might sound noble at first blush:

1. Individuals who suffer from homelessness have a right to housing. Today's public policy momentum is geared toward ending homelessness, not facilitating life in the public right-of-way.
2. The public right-of-way is to be enjoyed by all, without being subject to intimidation or lack of sanitary conditions. This legislation shifts the balance toward conditions that may impede business and render our downtown districts intimidating and uncomfortable for those who live, work, visit and go to school.

State Senator Jim Beall – SB 608 (Liu)

3. The limitations on law enforcement officials, BID agents and public or private security personnel to assist or aid individuals who are homeless will create a chilling effect on those who are often the first responders and in a position to assist. The legislation unfairly equates interactions with such personnel as “harassment.” In contrast, our BID Patrol has played a key role in helping vulnerable people move from the streets into services. Our BID is part of a coalition, Hollywood 4WRD, which has helped over 400 people move into permanent housing since 2010.

4. This bill would result in CA cities becoming more of a magnet for individuals to come and continue a homeless lifestyle. As if the weather is not enough, word of mouth will spread that CA is the place to come.

5. Often individuals who “choose” to live on the streets are suffering from substance abuse and/or mental illness, and granting them the “right” to live on our streets suggests society owes them no right to treatment or safe refuge in a home or shelter. We have had specific interactions with people who are vulnerable and mentally ill, who, once housed with supportive services, enjoy a quality of life far more dignified for a human being than being relegated to life on a sidewalk.

6. The bill places no limit on how many people may rest on a sidewalk, for example, for a given time. In our community, often large groups of young people will gather with their pets and pester passersby for money. This is intimidating to pedestrians, and the bill would make it difficult, if not impossible, to address these behaviors.

We urge a “no” vote on this bill and ask our Legislature to support efforts that result in positive outcomes with respect to moving people off the streets and into housing.

Sincerely,



Kerry Morrison
Executive Director

cc: Alison Dinsmore, Committee Analyst
Board of Directors, Hollywood Property Owners Alliance
Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell
Greg Spiegel, Office of Mayor Garcetti