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*Executive Director*

March 27, 2015

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

FROM: Kerry Morrison, Executive Director  
Hollywood Property Owners Alliance  
Managing agent for Sunset & Vine Business Improvement District

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



I am writing on behalf of the board of Directors for the Central Hollywood Coalition, which manages the Sunset & Vine Business Improvement District (BID) in Los Angeles. This is a nonprofit organization governed by 15 community leaders in the heart of Hollywood. We represent 115 property owners and are asking you to vote no on SB 608 (Liu), the "Right to Rest Act."

The Right to Rest Act is a re-branded version of a former bill that was defeated in 2013, the "Homeless Bill of Rights." Our concerns about this legislation remain the same as two years ago: individuals who suffer from homelessness have a right to shelter and permanent housing. Preserving their "right" to live and eat on the streets and sidewalks of our cities sets us back to a mindset prevalent over a decade ago -- that homelessness in America must be "managed" or tolerated. We have learned, and believe, that homelessness can be *ended*.

There are three reasons why we oppose this bill:

1. 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.

2. 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 equates interactions with such personnel as "harassment." Our BID Patrol has played an important role in helping to connect individuals who suffer from homelessness to services and housing, while helping to enforce laws that protect the public and quality of life.

3. This bill would result in CA cities becoming more of a magnet for individuals to come and continue a homeless lifestyle. 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 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. Legislative priorities should be oriented toward:

- Increasing the stock of affordable housing in this state
- Providing funding for vocational training and re-entry support for those leaving the criminal justice system and returning to their communities
- Overhauling the state’s mental health laws to facilitate the involuntary treatment of individuals who suffer from chronic and debilitating mental illness and deserve medical treatment before they harm themselves or others
- Providing resources to local communities for detox beds and quick access to substance abuse rehab to provide safe alternatives to those addicted to substances living on our streets
- Supporting the creation of more permanent supportive housing for those experiencing chronic homeless and debilitating conditions.

As business improvement districts who often have a first-name basis with many of the people who are homeless in our communities, these are the types of initiatives we are advocating for. We ask the legislature to join us in this endeavor, not tie our hands to help those who are most vulnerable in our society.

Cc: Alison Dinmore, Committee Analyst  
Board of Directors, Central Hollywood Coalition  
Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell  
Greg Spiegel, Deputy for Homelessness and Housing Policy, Office of the Mayor