

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

January 5, 2023

Dear Governor Newsom:

We write on behalf of a statewide network of nine philanthropic organizations with deep commitments to improving the health and welfare of Californians. Over the course of just your first term, we collectively made more than \$575 million dollars in grants aligned with the Administration's homelessness and housing priorities.

Thank you for your leadership, which has resulted in innovative new approaches, such as Project Homekey, that have established national models to meaningfully connect people who are unhoused to permanent housing. As you embark on your second term in office, we are encouraged that ending homelessness and building housing for all Californians remain at the top of your agenda, and that you are poised to take even bolder action than the historic measures in your first term. This bold leadership is essential as we work toward supporting communities where every person has a safe place to call home.

To continue to make progress, we—philanthropy, government, nonprofits—need to fundamentally shift how we address homelessness and housing insecurity throughout the State by following the lead of housing justice advocates and those who are most impacted by housing insecurity. This framing requires jettisoning ineffective aspects of the status quo in favor of creating an ecosystem where bold, innovative change is possible. Such an ecosystem requires two essential ingredients:

Firstly, we believe that the State needs to commit to an ongoing, consistent source of revenue to address homelessness and the lack of affordable housing in the State. We fully appreciate that the State's fiscal realities might call into question the feasibility of this approach. And yet, as you know, the housing and homelessness crises are decades in the making: the result of discriminatory and predatory practices which have disproportionately harmed Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC). Government agencies directly participated in some of these practices, such as redlining, and encouraged and supported others. It is therefore incumbent upon the government to play a leading role in redressing the harm and creating pathways for collective healing.

While the recent budgets have set aside billions of dollars for these issues, short-term infusions of funds are insufficient to confront the legacy of these practices. To the contrary, redress requires a long-term and sustained investment in strategies that advance housing policies rooted in equity and justice. This is particularly true given the ways in which Fair Housing laws restrict taking race into account in designing and implementing housing policies. Equitable housing strategies are not viable when subjected to the ups and downs of economic cycles.

Moreover, we believe that committing to an ongoing, reliable source of funding will promote greater accountability because it will allow communities to plan strategically for maximum impact instead of

short term, temporary gains. In short, a problem that is decades in the making requires funding commitments decades into the future.

Secondly, we urge you to center people with lived expertise when it comes to the allocation of resources that address housing and homelessness. By robustly and authentically involving people who have experienced homelessness and housing instability – particularly BIPOC Californians – in the design of relevant policies, government fundamentally shifts power, influence and agency to the people most proximate to the problem – focusing on the whole person rather than programmatic line items.

Such an approach requires the government to redress a legacy of inequity and racism, particularly anti-Black racism, in housing policies and practices. To do this, policies and practices must be inclusive, trauma-informed, and person-centered; based on self-determination and choice; adaptive and designed to predict and respond to the ongoing and future needs of people and communities; healing; and universally accessible and available everywhere, including in rural and tribal communities. These reflect the essence of housing justice.

As foundations who are on this journey to reflect such values, we offer our assistance in operationalizing this principle, drawing from our own lessons learned. This assistance could include the flexibility of our grants to complement state funding, the ability to convene partners, and the support for the compensation of people with lived expertise. We believe that ultimately, to realize substantial progress on housing for all Californians, our systems of care must be re-envisioned so that they center individual experiences.

The continued vibrancy, health, and success of the State requires commitment to a reliable, ongoing source of funding and full adoption of housing justice principles. As you did with Project Roomkey, California can once again lead the nation in equitably addressing housing and homelessness. We pledge our continued partnership and look forward to working in authentic collaboration with you.

Sincerely yours on behalf of the California Homelessness & Housing Policy Funders Network,



Fred Blackwell
Chief Executive Officer
San Francisco Foundation



Peter Laugharn
President and Chief Executive Officer
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

CC: Jason Elliott, Deputy Chief of Staff
Elena Chavez Quezada, Senior Advisor for Social Innovation