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April 8, 2025

Honorable Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
1021 O Street, Suite 7310
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Dr. Corey A. Jackson
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
1021 O Street, Suite 6120
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: County-administered housing and homelessness programs - SUPPORT

Dear Dr. Weber Pierson and Dr. Jackson,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to respectfully request your support to maintain funding for critical county-administered housing and homelessness programs, including Bringing Families Home (BFH), Home Safe, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Housing Support Program (HSP), and the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP). These programs have a proven track record of success stabilizing, rapidly rehousing, and transitioning vulnerable populations at risk of homelessness into permanent housing while concomitantly advancing safety, permanency, and economic security for families in the child welfare system, low-income families receiving cash assistance through CalWORKs, older adults experiencing elder abuse, and people with disabilities.

To maintain core statewide access to services across these impactful housing and homelessness programs, we ask the State for a targeted investment of \$309 million General Fund annually beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025–26 with multi-year availability. To meet the needs of our populations across all four programs and avoid any service reductions, an investment nearing \$472 million General Fund is required, however Kern is keenly aware of the challenging budget situation expected at the May Revision and we see opportunities to invest wisely despite fiscal uncertainty, while continuing to support vulnerable populations.

Compared to other local homeless response systems which exit 35% of overall participants into permanent housing,¹ Home Safe exits 62%, CalWORKs HSP exits 53%, BFH exits 54%, and HDAP exits 50% of clients into permanent housing.² Despite their demonstrated effectiveness, two of these programs—Home Safe and BFH—will cease to exist, while CalWORKs HSP and HDAP will face up to a 67% and 86% reduction, respectively, if no additional funding is included in the FY 2025-26 Budget. Funding cuts of this magnitude will jeopardize family reunifications, economic stability, and the overall health and welfare of our older adult populations. These reductions will result in longer stays in foster care for foster children, deepening their existing trauma; increased likelihood of

¹ Across Continuums of Care in California in 2023, just 35 percent of exits in the Homeless Management Information System were to permanent housing. See data source: [Housing and Urban Development, National Summary – CoC System Performance Measures since 2019](#).

² Per California Department of Social Services, percent of clients who exited to permanent housing in FY 2023-24.

institutionalization or premature death for older adults; and undermining of efforts to lift children and their families out of poverty in the CalWORKs program.

Given the uncertainty around continued funding and some counties' depletion of funds to-date, counties have been forced to scale back the number of individuals and families who receive housing assistance in order to keep the programs operational and prevent the loss of critical infrastructure, including contracts with community-based organizations specializing in housing and homelessness services. This impact has been acutely felt by our community-based providers, who partner with our agencies to provide direct services and supports, including legal assistance such as eviction protection, home modification and hazard abatement for older adults, and concrete items such as beds and other furniture that makes a house a home.

Most other housing programs have stringent eligibility requirements and/or limited flexibility to meet individual needs. BFH, Home Safe, HSP, and HDAP reach populations often untouched by the broader housing and homelessness system, bridging effectively to permanent housing solutions, while promoting health, safety, and well-being. These programs also help California to comply with federal and state laws and requirements with respect to meeting various outcome requirements and are highly cost-effective. For example, paying for an Adult Protective Services client's home back taxes (often less than \$10,000) through Home Safe can yield significant cost savings from avoiding repeated hospitalizations and nursing home care, and securing Social Security benefits for homeless adults through HDAP reduces the costs to law enforcement and other continuums of care.

Continued investment is critical to California's goal of eradicating homelessness and building a comprehensive and coordinated approach that protects our most vulnerable Californians from experiencing homelessness. These housing programs have led to expanded networks and leveraging of resources with local Coordinated Entry Systems and Continuums of Care to serve as a bridge to permanent housing options. Continued funding will preserve the existing infrastructure, capacity, and relationships with community-based providers—partnerships that have taken years for counties to establish and maintain.

We urgently encourage the Administration and the Legislature to invest in preserving critical funding for these programs. These housing and homelessness programs are integral to achieving positive program outcomes by helping vulnerable populations remain safe and achieve their housing goals and economic stability.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors urges your support for this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Leticia Perez', written in a cursive style.

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Honorable Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange