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California State Senate

SENATOR
SCOTT WILK
TWENTY-FIRST SENATE DISTRICT



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BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE #4

Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

May 15, 2018

RE: Budget: Funding the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council that they may achieve State Auditor recommendations

Governor Brown,

First, we write to commend you on the allocation of \$500,000 in your revised May budget proposal to fund the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council established by Chapter 847, Statutes of 2016 (SB 1380), and move it to the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency.

Just last week we presented a request to the Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Subcommittee No. 4 for the approval of funds to support the establishment of three full time staff – one executive and two support – positions at the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council. We could not be more pleased to see your May Revise include virtually the same priority.

As you know, California is currently facing the most severe homeless crisis in its history. Homeless statistics across the state have skyrocketed in recent years and despite ongoing efforts to address the issue those numbers continue to rise year after year and now exceed 130,000. Many communities in our state have declared a state of emergency regarding homelessness and some have experienced unprecedented outbreaks of infectious disease as their homeless populations continue to rise.

In light of these facts, last year Senator Wilk requested the Joint Legislative Audit Committee to authorize the State Auditor to conduct an audit of California's handling of homelessness in California and our methods of addressing this serious and growing issue. On April 19, 2018 that

audit (report No. 2017-112) was released, in it a condemnation of our state's practices on homelessness and, recommendations for a path forward.

Among the recommendations made by the Auditor was that "the Legislature should...include funding in the Budget Act of 2018 that will allow for...the state homeless council to hire permanent staff, including the appointment of an executive director." Our budget request and the priorities in your May Revise represent attempts to do just that and we could not be happier to have you on board.

The auditor stressed throughout the report that the funding and fleshing out of the Council would lead to more federal dollars coming California's way and would alleviate the burdens placed on our smaller and more rural communities in trying to compete for federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) monies. When surveyed by the State Auditor as a part of the pertinent report, area HUD Continuum of Care lead agencies consistently reported that they lacked funding, staff, and other resources to implement HUD-recommended activities, including raising funds and coordinating with other homeless service agencies.

The report also detailed state and local resources that the council could help to identify to fund homeless services in our communities, both rural and urban, large and small, and it stressed the importance of the Council's role in coordinating our statewide approach to homelessness; a role the Council is currently hamstrung from fulfilling due in large part to the fact it employs no permanent staff at present.


The audit laid out a number of recommendations for the council to better serve the many local agencies seeking to address homelessness throughout our state. However, without adequate staffing it will remain impossible for the Council to achieve those recommended goals and California's approach to addressing one of our most pressing issues will continue to be woefully inadequate.

Today we write not only to commend you on prioritizing the funding of the Council but to request that you see us each as a resource and ally in your quest to fulfill this priority in the final 2018-2019 budget.

We each look forward to working with you as we move through the budget process to ensure our shared goals regarding the Council are realized and we hope to be involved in the achievement of that goal every step of the way. In addition to extending our help and support, we respectfully urge that you veto or refuse to sign any budget passed by this Legislature that does not include such funding and that in your talks and negotiations regarding said Budget you include as a non-negotiable necessity the funding of the state's Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council.

Sincerely,


Senator Scott Wilk
21st Senate District


Assemblyman Adam Gray
21st Assembly District

Cc:

Senator Richard Roth, Chair
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration and General Government
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblyman Jim Cooper, Chair
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Holly Mitchell, Chair
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
State Capitol, Room 5019
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Assemblyman Phil Ting, Chair
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
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