

March 23, 2016

Honorable Carol Liu
California State Senate
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 876 (Liu) – Support

Dear Senator Liu,

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) supports your bill, **Senate Bill 876**, which will end the criminalization of rest and accompanying violations of basic human and civil rights for all people, regardless of their housing status.

CFPA is a statewide non-profit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. SB 876 gets at the central core of our mission by ensuring that those without homes can rest and share food (a most basic human need) in public without being criminalized.

California, with only 12% of the country's overall population but 22% of its homeless population and 25% of its homeless veteran population, is at the epicenter of the criminalization of homelessness. According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, California cities are substantially more likely than cities in other states to ban rest. While only 33% of non-California cities restrict this activity, 74% of California cities ban the practice.

Researchers from the Policy Advocacy Clinic at the University of California at Berkeley Law School analyzed the prevalence of these types of municipal codes restricting rest and sharing of food and identified over 500 municipal laws in California cities criminalizing standing, sitting, resting, sleeping and sharing of food in public places as well as laws making it illegal to ask for money – nearly nine laws per city, on average.

Criminalizing necessary life-sustaining practices not only worsens the condition of people without homes, but also narrows their opportunities to escape homelessness. By acknowledging the failure of municipal laws that criminalize poverty and homelessness, we hope that passage of this legislation will improve the focus on more humane and effective responses to homelessness.

CFPA supports **SB 876** and thanks you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Elyse Homel Vitale, MPH
Senior Advocate

cc: Paul Boden, Western Regional Advocacy Project (Co-Sponsor)
Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)



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