

March 15, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Member of the Senate  
State Capitol, Room 2059  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
**Sent Via Email to: [Katerina.Robinson@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Katerina.Robinson@sen.ca.gov)**

**Re: SB 18 (Skinner) – Keep Californians Housed**

Dear Senator Skinner:

SPUR supports a package of bills that address protection, preservation and production of all levels of housing. Thus we specifically support SB 18 – Keep Californians Housed. SB 18 seeks to stop homelessness before it starts by expanding state funding for rental assistance and legal aid to help residents who are facing eviction stay in their homes. Rental and legal assistance are a critical part of an overall effective and humane approach to the housing crisis that reflects the critical importance of tenant protection, housing preservation, and housing production.

SPUR (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association) is a member-supported nonprofit organization that promotes good planning and good government. We bring people together from across the political spectrum to develop solutions to the big problems our cities face. With offices in San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland, we are recognized as a leading civic planning organization and are respected for our independent and holistic approach to urban issues.

Access to a lawyer or emergency rent payments can be the difference between losing a home and keeping it. This will improve health, stability, and opportunity for thousands of residents including children, and this will help preserve existing affordable housing. Non-payment of rent is the leading cause of evictions in the much of California. An emergency rent assistance program would assist in cases where tenants have an urgent, temporary financial gap. It would help tenants stay in their homes, preventing evictions, periods of marginal housing, and homelessness for households at risk of eviction due to financial instability.

According to a 2009 Los Angeles study by the Economic Roundtable, providing services and emergency response to homeless individuals can cost taxpayers nearly \$35,000 per person a year. Meanwhile, an upfront investment in keeping families housed could save thousands of state dollars.

SB 18 will help prevent individuals and families from falling into homelessness by providing additional funding to the California Department of Housing and Community Development for rental assistance and legal aid, and requiring HCD to post informational material about landlords' obligations to tenants on their website.

It is critical that the California Legislature act quickly to curb the housing and homelessness crisis sweeping the state. For these reasons, we strongly support SB 18.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alicia John-Baptiste', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alicia John-Baptiste  
President & CEO