



## Senate Bill 914

# The HELP (“Homeless Equity for Left Behind Populations”) Act

### Bill Summary

SB 914 – The HELP Act – will reduce gender bias and disparities in outcomes in California’s response to homelessness by embedding a focus on domestic violence survivors and other vulnerable populations into local homelessness plans.

### Existing Law

Existing law creates the California Interagency Council on Homelessness to identify resources, benefits, and services that can be accessed to prevent and end homelessness in California.

### Background

Domestic violence is one of the leading drivers of homelessness for women. Nationally, 57% of unhoused women reported domestic violence was an immediate cause of their homelessness.<sup>1</sup> In California, 18% of unhoused individuals reported experiencing domestic violence according to the state’s Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS) demographic data.<sup>2</sup> Many survivors of domestic violence flee a dangerous situation with few resources – sometimes, with only the clothes on their backs.<sup>3</sup>

Unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness are unhoused individuals without children or other dependents.<sup>4</sup> Nationally, unaccompanied women comprise nearly one-in-three of all unhoused individuals.<sup>5</sup> And according to the California Policy Lab, 80 percent of unsheltered, unaccompanied women cited trauma or abuse as the cause of their

homelessness. They also wait on average more than 10 years to access stable housing, a rate twice that of men.<sup>6</sup>

Despite making up a significant portion of the homeless population, our state’s homelessness response does not appropriately consider the needs of these groups. Due to confidentiality requirements for survivors of domestic violence, victim service providers are prohibited by federal law from entering client-level information into the federal Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or the state’s HDIS. As a result, data about the number of survivors served, their needs, and program outcomes are not considered when measuring local responses to homelessness.

### Details of the Bill

SB 914 will make California the national leader in advancing a gender equity lens in local and state homeless response systems by requiring cities, counties, and continuums of care that receive state funding include domestic violence and unaccompanied women within the vulnerable populations for whom specific system supports are developed. SB 914 will require jurisdictions to include the risk of sexual violence and domestic violence when setting goals toward addressing the safety and wellness of individuals living in homeless encampments. SB 914 also requires the California Interagency Council on Homelessness to set measurable goals towards preventing and ending homelessness for these vulnerable populations.

<sup>1</sup> [California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, Domestic Violence Fact Sheet](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://bcsh.ca.gov/calich/hdis.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://laist.com/news/housing-homelessness/how-domestic-violence-became-the-no-1-cause-of-homelessness-for-women-in-los-angeles>

<sup>4</sup> [USICH, "Expanding the Toolbox: The Whole-of-Government Response to Homelessness." October 2020](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report – Part 1," January 2021](#)

<sup>6</sup> [California Policy Lab, "Health Conditions Among Unsheltered Adults in the U.S.," October 2019](#)



## Support

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- California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (*Co-Sponsor*)
- Downtown Women's Center (*Co-Sponsor*)
- Rainbow Services (*Co-Sponsor*)
- ACLU California Action
- Alexandria House
- American Association of Doctors of Behavioral Health
- Bay Area Legal Aid
- Brilliant Corners
- California Catholic Conference
- California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies
- California Rural Legal Assistance
- California Women's Law Center
- Central City Association of Los Angeles
- City of La Cañada Flintridge
- City of Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti
- Community Forward SF
- Community Legal Aid SoCal
- Corporation for Supportive Housing
- Domestic Violence Solutions for Santa Barbara County
- Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
- Family Violence Law Center
- Futures Without Violence
- Good Shepherd Center
- Gray's Trauma-Informed Care Services Corp.
- Harbor Community Health Centers
- Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law
- Haven Hills, Inc.
- Healthy Alternatives to Violent Environments (HAVEN)
- Homeless Health Care Los Angeles
- Housing California
- Hub for Urban Initiatives
- Human Options
- Imagine LA
- Interval House
- Jenesse Center, Inc.
- Jewish Family Service LA
- Junior Leagues of California State Public Affairs Committee
- LA Family Housing
- Little Hoover Commission
- Little Tokyo Service Center
- Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice
- Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- Los Angeles LGBT Center
- National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
- Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County
- New Star Family Justice Center
- Representative Nanette Diaz Barragán, California 44th Congressional District
- Roberts Enterprise Development Fund
- Safe Housing Alliance
- Safe Place for Youth
- Shelter Partnership
- Sojourn
- Sycamores
- The People Concern
- United Way of Greater Los Angeles
- Valley Oasis
- Venice Community Housing
- Walnut Avenue Family & Women's Center
- Western Center on Law and Poverty
- WISEPlace
- Women's and Children's Crisis Shelter
- Women's Center – High Desert
- Women's Foundation California
- YMCA Glendale and Pasadena



## **For More Information**

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