



Berkeley Office  
2150 Dwight Way  
Berkeley, CA 94704  
(510) 540-0878 tel  
(510) 540-0403 fax

West Oakland Office  
2601 San Pablo Ave.  
Oakland, CA, 94612  
(510) 695-2260 tel  
(510) 858-7867 fax

April 22, 2025

To: The Honorable Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

Honorable Members  
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

The Honorable Dr. Corey Jackson  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2

Honorable Members  
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2

From: Patricia E. Wall, Executive Director, Alameda County Homeless Action Center

RE: **SUPPORT FOR CRITICAL HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES  
FUNDED BY THE HOUSING AND DISABILITY ADVOCACY PROGRAM  
(HDAP)**

On behalf of the Homeless Action Center (HAC), I respectfully request that the legislature maintain funding for the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP). This funding will allow essential and proven supportive services that HAC provides to disabled and unhoused individuals to continue and thrive.

Since 1990, HAC has provided advocacy and legal representation at no cost to disabled, homeless, and very low-income people in Alameda County. Our primary service is representing clients in Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) claims. While SSI and SSDI claims are pending, HAC also represents individuals in attaining and retaining General Assistance, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and CalWORKs. We also provide housing navigation, homeless outreach services, and transitional housing to our clients. HAC holds drop-in services four days a week, open to anyone in the community who needs public benefits assistance or has questions. We assist clients and community members to access identity documents like IDs and birth certificates, notary services, supporting connection to medical and mental health care, and referrals to other service providers.

HDAP funding has allowed us to greatly expand our housing services for clients. Through this funding, HAC now operates a seven-bed transitional residence called Almost Home. HDAP funds pay for three housing advocates who are each helping 25 clients at any given time. Our Mending Bridges project reunites formerly incarcerated clients with family members by covering their portion of housing costs to live with family. All of these programs would end without HDAP funding, putting clients back on the streets and with no one to advocate for them to access housing.

### **Almost Home**

With HDAP funding, HAC created and now operates Almost Home, a Safe Haven housing program with 7 beds. Almost Home is a house on Haste Street in Berkeley managed by HAC staff. Almost Home provides seven SSI legal services clients with temporary, supportive, transitional housing. The goal of the program is to stabilize clients when they are near completion of the long waiting period for resolution of their SSI case and permanent housing placement through housing case management. Almost Home allows HAC to place some clients in-house, making it even simpler for attorneys to reach them while they work on their cases. Alameda County has an additional Safe Haven temporary housing site, Casa Maria. Casa Maria houses 17 people at a time.

Since December 2020, the two Safe Havens have sheltered 106 people, 22 of whom were aged 55 or older. Transitional housing is an important step in the journey to being permanently housed, as it gives clients a chance to reacclimate to being indoors, to learn how to care for a space, and to be ready to succeed in permanent housing. Without HDAP funding Almost Home and Casa Maria would have to close, putting currently housed people back on the street and allowing for no future transitional housing.

Currently all Almost Home and Casa Maria residents are on a pathway to permanent housing. If the HDAP funding is taken away, they will no longer be on a pathway to permanent housing, and they will all have to leave their current temporary housing and be back living on the street.

### **Housing Navigation**

HDAP funding covers three housing advocacy positions at HAC. Our housing advocates work closely with SSI clients who are on the coordinated entry list to get them into housing. HAC serves the most chronically homeless and disabled, so that those who are in most need of help accessing services gets direct support in doing so. Housing advocates are a part of our outreach team and they regularly meet people where they are at, including on the streets and in encampments. They keep in contact with clients through these visits so when housing opportunities appear, they have already built rapport and can more easily locate the unhoused individual to get them into housing.

Housing advocates help clients get “document ready,” which requires obtaining extensive documentation in the form of disability verification, income verification, and identity documents so when a client is matched with a housing opportunity, there are no barriers to immediate move-in. If a person is matched with housing and not “document ready” they may lose that housing opportunity. Once a client decides to accept a match, housing advocates assist with the move-in day, including driving the client to the new apartment, helping them move their current possessions in, and driving them to a store to buy necessary new apartment items such as sheets, towels, dishes, and cutlery using Home Stretch funding the housing advocates applied for. Between December 2020 and January 2024, HAC outreach staff navigated 135 disabled, homeless clients into permanent housing. In calendar year 2024 alone, HAC housing navigators successfully placed 56 previously unhoused people into permanent supportive housing – more than 18% of all homeless people (311) moved into permanent housing in Alameda County last year. Without HDAP funding, those clients would still be on the streets.

### **Mending Bridges**

Mending Bridges is a pilot program focused on creating a pathway toward housing instead of homelessness for people leaving jail or prison. The program provides a \$600 rental payment to family members – including family of choice – who are able to house SSI Advocacy clients who are experiencing homelessness. Clients must have been involved with the justice system to be eligible. The family member agrees to provide a room in their house or apartment. Mending Bridges pays a one-time \$1,000 rehousing payment and then an ongoing \$600 monthly payment while the individual’s SSI is pending. Once their SSI is approved, the client is responsible for the ongoing \$600 rental payment.

The pilot aims to improve the connection between the communities that support formerly incarcerated individuals experiencing homelessness, while reducing the rent burden on the family members who are housing them. The project also provides a staff member to problem-solve and make sure that the housing is a good fit for the client and their family. A significant proportion of clients we serve experience homelessness immediately after incarceration and loss of connection to supportive community such as family; the Mending Bridges program is a way to shift this paradigm. Without this HDAP funded program these individuals would be on the street.

### **Conclusion**

At a time of heightened national anxiety around the precarity of popular and effective social programs continuing to exist, California has an opportunity to be a leader in how to take care of our neighbors and the most vulnerable around us. Choosing to fund programs that support the housing needs of people with disabilities would be a clear example of this type of leadership. The current FY2025-26 budget proposal seeks to take away funds originally granted to HDAP, one of the only programs focused on preventing homelessness for people

with disabilities. We urge the Legislature to reject this proposal. HDAP currently funds three very successful programs just in our one non-profit. The impact of removing this funding across the state would be cruel to the many people who have benefited and will benefit in the future.

These HDAP funded programs are working to get people with disabilities off the street and into permanent housing. Taking away the current funding would put these disabled individuals back on the streets and would take away pathways for individuals to secure permanent housing in the future. In a time of an unprecedented homelessness crisis for this State, where the Governor has prioritized moving people out of homelessness, cutting funding that is currently allowing that to happen is nonsensical. HDAP is currently getting people out of tents and into housing and Alameda County has distributed this money in a way that ensures it is being utilized on the ground. Taking back this money will put people on the street and create more red tape and roadblocks before they have hopes of getting back into housing. Money should not be cut for working housing programs, instead all possible programs that get people out of homelessness voluntarily should be funded.

Most notably, this funding was already promised, and HAC's efficiently targeted expansion of services was in reliance on delivery of that funding. To rescind the funding now is unconscionable. HAC pleads with the Governor and the state legislature to stop this clawback cruelty.

Sincerely,



Patricia E. Wall  
Executive Director

Cc: Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Committee on Budget Subcommittee No. 2  
Elizabeth Schmitt, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3  
Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore  
Elizabeth Fuller, Assembly Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care  
Richard Figueroa, Office of the Governor  
Hanna Azemati, California Department of Social Services  
Senator Jesse Arreguin  
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks