

September 24, 2021
Resubmitted with Additional Signatories: October 15, 2021

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Hon. Buffy Wicks, Chair, and Members
Assembly Select Committee on Social Housing

Re: Fundamental Principles of Social Housing

Dear Chair Wicks and Members:

We are over 85 organizations, including many membership organizations of low-income tenants and union workers across California, that have worked since well before the pandemic to ensure that California lives up to its promise: that every one of our residents enjoy safe, decent, and genuinely affordable housing as a right. Achieving that promise on a scale that will meet the need will require substantial investment in social housing. That includes both the construction of new units of social housing and the preservation of existing units as social housing.

Contrary to that promise, our homes are today treated as commodities available to the highest bidder; with the global financialization of housing described by the United Nations [\[link\]](#), the highest bidder is often an investor in a distant part of the world. Not only does this scheme preclude millions of individuals from gaining access to affordable, safe and stable housing, it also exacerbates the racial inequality felt by communities of color who are statistically the most affected by gentrification, housing displacement, and housing insecurity.

In response to these devastating trends, and the growing pandemic of homelessness in California, since 2018, many of us have launched and expanded a statewide working group on social housing. We are heartened that the policy discussion about social housing has moved from magazines and newspapers to the Capitol. We applaud your leadership in creating this first-ever Select Committee on social housing, and write to share what we have learned, both in our international research on models of social housing and in organizing on the ground in our communities.

While there are various models of both ownership and rental social housing in cities and countries around the globe, they all share an important set of characteristics. Those characteristics add up to a general definition of social housing, as follows:

1. Social housing is decommodified housing, meaning it is either *publicly or cooperatively owned, or owned by a qualified community-based nonprofit* with a mission to provide social housing. It is forever protected from transfer to private, for-profit ownership.
2. It is available at affordable cost to *residents of all income levels*, from the very lowest to those of moderate incomes.
3. It is *permanently* affordable -- unlike, for instance, affordability covenants in the U.S. that often have expiration dates.
4. It provides its residents with *the right to participate democratically* in its operation and management, and protections from arbitrary eviction.

We applaud Assemblymember Lee, a member of this Select Committee, for including this definition of social housing in his pending two-year bill, AB 387.

Thank you again for making social housing an official subject of legislative interest. We look forward to participating in your first Select Committee meeting in October, where we will share our perspectives on the urgent need for social housing, and the appropriate way to define it in state law. We ask that you include one or more representatives of our group as panelists at the inaugural meeting of the Select Committee.

Sincerely,

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Christina Livingston, Executive Director
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)

Shanti Singh, Communications and Legislative Director
Tenants Together

Richard A. Marcantonio, Managing Attorney
Public Advocates Inc.

Sonia Suresh, Assistant Director of De-commodified Housing
Strategic Actions for Just Economy (SAJE)

Shane Ruiz and Annika Bastacky, Co-Chairs
Democratic Socialists of America, East Bay chapter

Leslie Chang, Campaigns Coordinator
Democratic Socialists of America, Los Angeles chapter

Joseph Tomás Mckellar, Executive Director
PICO California

STATEWIDE / NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Michele Gilliam, Deputy Political Director
Action Center on Race and the Economy

Mari Perez-Ruiz, Chair
CADEM (California Democratic Party) Renters Council

Nan Brasmer, President
CA Alliance for Retired Americans

Rob Wiener, Executive Director
California Coalition for Rural Housing

Leo Goldberg, Co-Director
California Community Land Trust Network

Zach Lou, Coalition Manager
California Green New Deal Coalition

Lorena Garcia Zermeno, Policy and Communications Coordinator
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice

Kevin Stein, Deputy Director
California Reinvestment Coalition

Nina Moussavi, Organizing Manager
Indivisible CA Statestrong

Francisco Dueñas, Executive Director
Housing Now! California

Theresa Zamora, Active California State Director
Mi Familia Vota

Shamus Roller, Executive Director
National Housing Law Project

Jake Varghese, Board Member
Our Revolution California

Chione Lucina Muñoz Flegal, Managing Director
PolicyLink

Philip Tegeler, President/Executive Director
Poverty & Race Research Action Council

Libby Sanchez, Government Relations Advocate
SEIU California

Sonrisa Cooper, Transformative Communities Program Manager
The Greenlining Institute

Michael F. Rawson, Director
The Public Interest Law Project

Ali Caccavella, VP of Policy and Systems Change
uAspire

Pastor Bridie C. Roberts, Deputy Director of Community Organizing
Unite Here Local 11

Cynthia Castillo, Policy Advocate
Western Center on Law and Poverty

Kaitlyn Monck, Housing Specialist
Women's Empowerment

LOCAL & REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Sandy Perry, President
Affordable Housing Network of Santa Clara County

Michelle White, Executive Director
Affordable Housing Services

Terry Sandoval, Chair
Alameda County Democratic Party

Laura Raymond, Director
Alliance for Community Transit - Los Angeles

Dr. Jim Miller, Vice President
American Federation of Teachers, Local 1931

Kamilah Zadi, Program Director
Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice

Zerita Jones, Co-Founder
Baldwin Leimert Crenshaw, Local LA Tenants Union

Stephen Barton, President
Bay Area Community Land Trust

Robin Podolsky, Rabbi
Bend the Arc Jewish Action- Southern California

Linda Franklin, Secretary
Berkeley Citizens Action

Julia Cato, Chair
Berkeley Tenants Union

Lynette Jung Lee, Chairperson
Buena Vista Community Institute

Omar Carrera, CEO

Canal Alliance

Ana Gonzalez, Interim Executive Director

Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice

Jesus Martinez, Executive Director

Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative

Carla De Paz, Project Director

Community Power Collective

Brandon Henriquez, Co-Chair

Democratic Socialists of America, Silicon Valley chapter

Zipporah Collins, Chair

East Bay Communities for Action

Gloria Bruce, Executive Director

East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO)

Val Carlson, Steering Committee

End Homelessness Now-LA

Sharon Kinlaw, Executive Director

Fair Housing Council of the San Fernando Valley

Pablo Zatarain, Executive Director

Greater Napa Valley Fair Housing Center

Eli Jacobovitz, Chief Executive Officer

Ground Game LA

Maribel Nunez, Executive Director

Inland Equity Partnership

Mahdi Manji, Public Policy Advocate

Inner City Law Center

Elias-Deen Zadi, Community Organizer and Liaison

JEPWA CLT (Jefferson Exposition Park West Adams Community Land Trust)

Susan Park, Community Organizer

Korean Resource Center

Alexandra Suh, Executive Director

Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)

David Levitus, Executive Director

LA Forward

Suzanne Dershowitz, Housing Policy Attorney

Legal Aid of Sonoma County

Ashley Elias, Housing Rights Organizer

Los Angeles Community Action Network

Esther Malkin, Founder

Monterey County Renters United

Ian Winters, Executive Director

Northern California Land Trust

Tamie Dramer, Executive Director

Organize Sacramento

Aleta Alston Toure, Coop Member

Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Cooperative

Bill Przylucki, Executive Director

People Organized for Westside Renewal

Charlie Sciammas, Lead Community Organizer

People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights (PODER)

Laura Thomas, President

Renewed Hope Housing Advocates

Laksh Bhasin, Housing Committee Coordinator

San Francisco Berniecrats

Saki Bailey, Executive Director

San Francisco Community Land Trust

Peter Cohen and Fernando Marti, Co-Directors

San Francisco Council of Community Housing Organizations

Anastasia Yovanopoulos, Steering Committee member

San Francisco Tenants Union

Liz Gonzalez, Organizer

Silicon Valley De-Bug

Derek Steele, Interim Executive Director

Social Justice Learning Institute

Hina Ahmad, Program Manager

South Asian Network

Elizabeth Gonzalez, President

South Bay Community Land Trust

Chris Tittle, Director of Land and Housing Justice

Sustainable Economies Law Center

Kasey Ventura - Director of Land & Tenant Justice

The Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust

Laura Cutrona

Transform Alameda

Oscar Monge, Associate Director

TRUST South LA

Rafael Jaime, President

UAW Local 2865

Rick Bates, Lead Research and Policy Analyst

UNITE HERE Local 30

Rev. Dr. Myrna Tuttle

United Church of Christ

Ilaf Esuf, Housing & Economic Policy Analyst

United Way Bay Area

Becky Dennison, Executive Director

Venice Community Housing Corporation

Jack Kurzweil

Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club

Jeffrey Buchannan, Policy Director

Working Partnerships USA

Nico Calavita, Professor Emeritus, San Diego State University

Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell, Associate Teaching Professor, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, UC San Diego

Letter to Chair and Members, Assembly Select Committee on Social Housing

September 24, 2021, resubmitted October 15, 2021

Page 8 of 7

Ananya Roy, Professor, Department of Urban Planning, Social Welfare, and Geography,
University of California, Los Angeles, and Director, UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and
Democracy

Margaretta Lin, Lecturer, UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy & Department of City
and Regional Planning