



## AB 920 – Anti-Discrimination of People Experiencing Homelessness

### SUMMARY

AB 920 would add housing status as a measure of homelessness to the list of protected categories under California’s anti-discrimination statute in order to prevent against the routine discrimination of people who are unhoused.

### BACKGROUND

Cal. Gov’t Code § 11135 is California’s anti-discrimination statute, which prohibits discrimination based on a list of protected statuses that includes sex, race, religion, medical condition, marital status, and age. Since its passage, the statute has been amended multiple times to expand the list of protected categories. In 2019, Senator Holly Mitchell authored the Crown Act, which added hair to the list of protections referenced in the section.

On any given night, California has around 173,000 unhoused individuals, the overwhelming majority of whom do not have access to a shelter. As a result, unhoused people are forced to sleep out in the open increasing their visibility and opening them up to being targeted in acts of violence and discrimination.

### PROBLEM

With the lack of shelters and permanent supportive housing across the state, unhoused people resort to lying down in open spaces and opening themselves up to greater and more violent encounters of discrimination. In addition, despite only accounting for approximately 6% of the State’s total population, Black people are nearly a third of the people in our State who are unhoused. Moreover, a recent Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority report has indicated that the rise in homelessness among Latinx communities has sharply increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A survey conducted by the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) revealed that 70.4% of unhoused people self-reported facing discrimination solely based

on their housing status. They are also targets of bias-motivated violence because they are unhoused. A 2018 NCH report using data from California police departments shows that unhoused people are routinely victims of assault and harassment across the state.

The rampant presence of discrimination faced by people based simply on their housing status runs counter to our state’s important goal of providing dignified housing and care for all Californians, including our most vulnerable neighbors who are experiencing homelessness.

### SOLUTION

AB 920 will protect unhoused people from being targeted, persecuted, or denied access to programs and benefits by the state, or a state-funded agency, simply because of their housing status.

Adding housing status to California’s anti-discrimination law advances the civil rights of people who are unfairly targeted simply because they are experiencing homelessness. It will help to ensure that our broader solution framework for solving homelessness continues to be rooted in care, supportive services, compassion, affordable housing, and local innovations that build on the core needs of people who are experiencing homelessness -- while simultaneously protecting our most vulnerable neighbors from senseless discrimination that runs counter to those goals.

### SUPPORT

- ACLU California Action (Co-Sponsor)
- Disability Rights California (Co-Sponsor)
- Housing California (Co-Sponsor)
- Public Advocates (Co-Sponsor)
- Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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