



CITY OF LAVERNE CITY HALL

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April 15, 2025

Senate Judiciary Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3240
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted via the Legislative Position Letter Portal

RE: Opposition to SB 634 (Pérez): Homelessness – Civil and Criminal Penalties

Dear Honorable State Judiciary Committee Members:

On behalf of the City of La Verne, we firmly oppose SB 634, which would prohibit local jurisdictions from adopting or enforcing ordinances that impose civil or criminal penalties for actions related to homelessness. While we recognize and share the bill's intent to protect the dignity of individuals experiencing homelessness, the proposed legislation would severely restrict the ability of cities like La Verne to address the growing homelessness crisis in a balanced, effective, and locally responsive manner.

As a small, but full-service city, La Verne is deeply committed to supporting our unhoused residents through compassionate service delivery, mental health partnerships, and crisis intervention programs. However, SB 634 strips cities of all enforcement tools, giving individuals the legal right to sleep, sit, or erect tents in any public space without consequence. This would create insurmountable challenges for maintaining clean, safe, and accessible streets, parks, and public facilities—especially in small cities with limited resources and personnel. SB 634 strips the leverage that some individuals require to agree to service after repeated attempts are made through extensive outreach and engagement by non-law enforcement personnel and clinicians which are summarily denied. Without enforcing local ordinances that impose civil or criminal penalties, known programs such as Homeless Court are rendered ineffective.

The bill directly undermines the Governor's November 2024 executive order directing local governments to take meaningful action on encampments or risk losing state homelessness funding. SB 634 would block cities from complying with that directive, making it impossible to maintain eligibility for critical funding while being legally barred from enforcement actions.

Moreover, this proposal flies in the face of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in *Johnson v. Grants Pass*, which clarified that local governments may impose reasonable regulations on encampments in public spaces. In response, Governor Newsom stated the decision "removes the legal ambiguities that have tied the hands of local officials for years." Yet SB 634 reintroduces that uncertainty and once again ties our hands—this time by state statute.

Local governments have worked tirelessly to develop strategies that comply with constitutional limits while preserving public order and connecting residents with services. This bill would upend those efforts and jeopardize progress across the state.

Rather than eliminating all enforcement options, the state should be working alongside cities to ensure local governments can respond to this crisis with both compassion and practicality.

The state should also be working with county governments to increase the amount of mental health facilities to provide more options for cities to work with individuals experiencing homelessness to get the medical and behavioral health care that they need, either on an out-patient or in-patient basis. The current lack of behavioral health facilities can be directly linked to local government's inability to successfully transition the most needful persons experiencing homelessness from the street to a place of care.

We urge the Legislature to reject SB 634. Cities need flexibility to tailor approaches to the specific needs of their communities, not have our tools limited in resolving this growing crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Hepburn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "T" and "H".

Tim Hepburn
Mayor