



**LEGISLATION &  
COMMUNICATIONS UNIT**  
1831 K Street  
Sacramento, CA 95811-4114  
Tel: (916) 504-5800  
TTY: (800) 719-5798  
Intake Line: (800) 776-5746  
Fax: (916) 504-5807  
[www.disabilityrightsca.org](http://www.disabilityrightsca.org)

April 26, 2021

Honorable Anthony Portantino  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 2206  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 234 (WIENER) as amended March 2, 2021 SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Portantino:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports SB 234**. This bill is scheduled for hearing before Senate Appropriations Committee on May 3, 2021.

This bill creates a forgivable loan program to be used to create new housing for youth between ages 16 and 26, who are currently or formerly in foster care, youth experiencing homelessness and youth under probation supervision. A portion of the funds would be specifically targeted to youth in foster care aged 18-21. The loans could be used for pre-development costs, site acquisition, architectural and design costs, and construction or refurbishing of sites.

Chapin Hall's recent CalYouth study reported over 35% of youth reported they experienced homelessness while actively enrolled in extended foster care. And, 79% of California's unaccompanied homeless youth are unsheltered. In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly in the hardest hit counties, there is no option to "shelter in place" or "stay at home" for these youth.

It is critical to invest in increased housing availability to ensure that all of the young people who want to participate extended foster care, a supportive program assisting youth in transitioning to independence, can take full advantage of the program and unaccompanied homeless youth are safely and stably housed to prevent the heightened risk of their entering chronic homelessness.

SB 234 will directly reduce the risk of homelessness by increasing housing available to transition age youth by providing non-profit organizations or local government's resources to more swiftly develop housing capacity through pre-development funds:

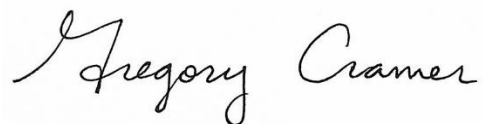
- Loans will be interest free forgivable loans for the purposes of building emergency shelter, transitional housing or permanent supportive housing for transition aged youth:
  - five years for rehabilitation,
  - seven years for substantial rehabilitation,
  - 10 years for acquisition and rehabilitation or new construction, or
  - 20 years for conversion to permanent supportive housing for transitioned aged youth.
- 50% will be available for projects to serve youth in foster care between ages 18-21.
- Loans would be forgiven at the completion of the specified year term. To protect the integrity of the funds, if a transfer or conveyance of the project property occurs prior to that time resulting in the property no longer being used as emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, or transitional housing, the loan would be terminated and the organization would be required to repay the loan.
- A project may opt to not have the loan forgiven, and the property will no longer be restricted to its original intended use and shall be subject to the provisions subject to penalties.

Removing financial barriers to construction will address both the pre-existing housing crisis and persistent housing needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic for vulnerable transition aged youth by reducing construction

financing timelines to more quickly develop new specialized housing inventory.

For these reasons, DRC supports this bill. Please contact me if you have any questions about our position or if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory Cramer".

Gregory Cramer  
Senior Legislative Advocate  
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Honorable Scott Wiener, California State Senate  
Angela Hill, Legislative Director, Office of Senator Wiener