March 25, 2019

Honorable Scott Wiener
Chair, Housing Committee
California State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 744 (Caballero) as introduced February 22, 2019 – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Wiener:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports SB 44. This bill is scheduled for hearing before the Senate Housing Committee on April 2, 2019.

There is a housing crisis in California. The shortage of housing is particularly acute for those who are homeless and have mental illnesses. This bill would expedite the local and state siting process for the 20,000 plus housing units authorized through the $2 billion California’s No Place Like Home (NPLH) program that was overwhelmingly supported by voters in 2018 through Proposition 2.

SB 744 will streamline the building permit approval process for No Place Like Home supportive housing developments for people living with a mental illness who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Among other things, the bill would require local governments to approve permanent supportive housing projects as a “use by right” in areas where local governments already allow multifamily and mixed use development if the supportive housing development is consistent with an applicable sustainable communities strategy or an alternative planning strategy and meets other
specified state and local government requirements, including any applicable objective local design review standards.

SB 744 would also require local governments to approve permanent supportive housing projects that meet specified requirements, such as if the housing is in a county’s application for competitive funds under the No Place Like Home program. Local agencies could engage in design review, subject to specified requirements, but permanent supportive housing would be declared a “use by right” in zones where multifamily and mixed uses are permitted, including nonresidential zones permitting multifamily uses, subject to specified criteria.

These provisions will go a long way toward meeting the promise of the No Place Like Home program: more supportive housing for homeless persons with mental illnesses. It is time to make the program a reality.

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.

Very truly yours,

Curtis Child
Legislative Director
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Housing Committee
    Erin Riches, Chief Consultant, Senate Housing Committee
    Honorable Anna Caballero, California State Senate
    Adriana Zerio, Legislative Director, Office of Senator Caballero
    Doug Yoakam, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus Committee