



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Board of Supervisors - Third District

Subject: Amendment to Senate Bill 329 to expand housing opportunities

Meeting Date: January 14, 2025

Formal Title: Direct the Chair to write a letter to Assemblymember Pellerin and Senator Laird urging them to propose an amendment to Senate Bill 329 to expand housing opportunities for participants in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program

Recommended Actions

1. Direct the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to send a letter to Assemblymember Pellerin and Senator Laird urging them to propose an amendment to Senate Bill 329 to expand housing opportunities for participants in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program.

Executive Summary

Senate Bill 329 (SB 329), adopted in 2019, was passed with the intention of preventing landlords from discriminating against participants in rental assistance programs. Unfortunately, the legislation has had the unintended consequence of preventing 100% affordable housing providers and landlords who wanted to rent to lower income families from giving preference to participants in these programs. It is critical that our legislative representatives advocate for affordable housing by introducing legislation to allow housing providers to give preference to Section 8 voucher holders.

Discussion

As described in the attached letter from the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz, housing discrimination based on “source of income” has been prohibited in California for many years. While this prohibition had many benefits, the definition of “source of income” excluded rental assistance payments. This allowed landlords to legally refuse to rent to tenants receiving rental assistance, like Section 8 vouchers.

SB 329 was adopted in 2019 with the objective of preventing discrimination against Section 8 voucher holders. It expanded the definition of “source of income” to include rental assistance. While this solved one problem, unintentionally it created another. Under SB 329, affordable housing providers, including the Housing Authority, and individual landlords wanting to rent to voucher holders are prohibited from giving preference to participants in rental assistance programs. This situation causes hardships for affordable housing providers and potentially restricts the availability of affordable housing opportunities.

The Housing Authority letter proposes an amendment to SB 329 that would correct the current problem. It would enable housing providers to establish preferences for voucher holders, thereby increasing housing stability and success rates for voucher holders and enhancing the viability of affordable housing developments and units.

Our Board has a strong commitment to increasing affordable housing opportunities and supporting the Housing Authority's request is consistent with this commitment.

Financial Impact

The recommended action would have no financial impact.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Attainable Housing

Submitted By:

Justin Cummings

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.