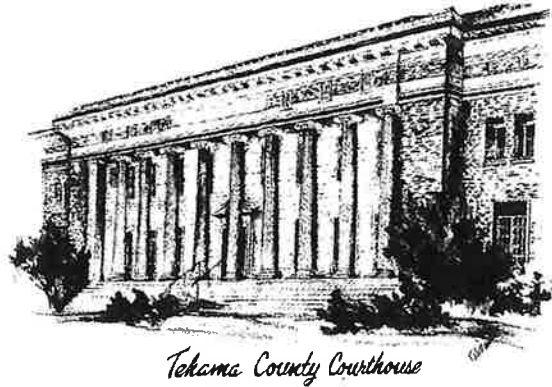


Board of Supervisors
COUNTY OF TEHAMA

District 1 – Rob Burroughs
District 2 – Tom Walker
District 3 – Pati Nolen
District 4 – Matt Hansen
District 5 – Greg Jones



Gabriel Hydrick
Chief Administrator

April 14, 2025

The Honorable Aisha Wahab, Chair
Senate Housing Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 3330
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 16 (Blakespear) – Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program: housing element: Integrated Plan for Behavioral Health Services and Outcomes.
As Amended March 25, 2025 – Oppose
Set for hearing April 22, 2025**

Dear Senator Wahab:

On behalf of Tehama County, I write to share strong opposition to Senate Bill 16 authored by Senator Catherine Blakespear. While our county supports strengthening the state's homelessness response system, this measure takes a misguided approach that will exacerbate homelessness and redirect funding that is needed for safety net services and housing for the most vulnerable Californians.

Our county supports the creation of a comprehensive homelessness response system that has defined roles for counties, cities, and the state, and that would fund those defined responsibilities with sufficient ongoing funding. Unfortunately, SB 16 does not meet that goal. Conversely, SB 16 conflicts with the goal of a collaborative, community-based effort and mistakenly implies that counties are failing to do their part in addressing the homeless crisis by somehow withholding services from individuals in homeless shelters. The requirement for counties to fund half of the cost to operate city homeless shelters will result in less investment in permanent housing and supportive services for unsheltered individuals.

Tehama County has worked collaboratively with cities in our county, the continuum of care (CoC), and other local partners to address the homelessness crisis. We went through a six-month planning process with these partners to develop a comprehensive regional homelessness action plan that reflects a mutual agreement on how to address homelessness in our region. This included making collaborative decisions on addressing all aspects of homelessness response including connecting individuals to health and human services, prevention efforts, conducting street outreach, supporting shelters, and operating permanent supportive housing. This plan was submitted jointly as part of the application for Round 5 of the Homeless Housing, Accountability

and Prevention (HHAP) program and was approved by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

In our county, the primary focus for addressing homelessness involves providing permanent and supportive housing, along with collaborative efforts through the Tehama County Continuum of Care (CoC). Key projects include the development of the PATH Navigation Center, which offers access to support services like employment assistance and healthcare. Tehama County works to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services by bringing together various organizations.

Unfunded and Inappropriate Mandate

SB 16 would require counties to cover 50% of the operations costs for city-operated shelters, while providing no funding source to meet this mandate. Counties are responsible for providing health and human services to eligible residents throughout the entire county, regardless of their housing status, which is different than the operational expenses of shelters. The responsibility for paying for the operations of a city-operated shelter within a city jurisdiction should reside with the city as they are the only entity with authority to make the decision to operate the shelter in the first place. Any county contributions towards the operations of city-operated shelters should reflect local collaborative planning on how to best address the homelessness crisis in that community and not be the result of a one-size-fits-all mandate. A notable example of collaborative planning between Tehama County and the City of Red Bluff is the joint effort to address homelessness, particularly through the development of the PATH Navigation Center. This partnership involved funding, planning, and ongoing coordination to provide resources and support for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Negatively Impacts Other Aspects of Homeless Response

The mandate in this bill focuses on only one aspect of the state's homelessness response system and does so in a way that will have detrimental impacts to the other programs and services that we know are needed for a comprehensive homeless response. By creating a specific funding obligation solely for interim shelters and for only one of the three entities that receives HHAP funding, SB 16 will require counties to prioritize HHAP and other resources for shelter operations over creating permanent housing and make it more difficult to provide the needed social, health, and behavioral health services to homeless individuals.

Inconsistent with State Priorities

Rounds 5 and 6 of the HHAP program reflect a policy decision of the Governor and Legislature to prioritize utilizing funds for permanent housing before any funds can be used for new interim housing. SB 16 instead moves the HHAP program away from prioritizing permanent housing and completely disregards the collaborative local decisions made with state direction and guidance in the recently approved regional plans. Instead, it directs only counties - not cities or CoCs - on how to spend funding for one specific aspect of homelessness.

Tehama County strongly opposes SB 16 due to its significant and adverse impacts on our ability to effectively address homelessness through a balanced, locally informed approach. The bill undermines current state and regional strategies that prioritize permanent housing solutions and threatens the collaborative momentum built under the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Program.

Rounds 5 and 6 of the HHAP program reflect a deliberate and thoughtful policy choice by the Governor and Legislature to prioritize permanent housing. These decisions were made in close

partnership with local governments, including Tehama County, and were based on proven data showing that permanent housing is the most effective long-term solution to homelessness. Under this structure, counties, cities, and Continuums of Care (CoCs) have worked together to craft regional plans tailored to local needs, with clear, state-guided direction.

SB 16 dismantles this progress by unilaterally shifting HHAP priorities away from permanent housing and instead mandates counties to allocate funds specifically for interim housing, regardless of local needs or strategic planning. This not only disrupts the regional coordination developed under state-approved plans but also excludes cities and CoCs from the decision-making process, isolating counties and limiting their flexibility to allocate resources where they are most impactful.

For Tehama County, this top-down funding mandate presents serious challenges. We have invested significant time and resources into developing a regional strategy that aligns with the state's emphasis on permanent housing. Redirecting limited funds to interim solutions without addressing long-term housing needs will reduce the county's ability to:

- Fund and sustain permanent supportive housing projects already underway or in development.
- Maintain local partnerships built through regional collaboration.
- Address the root causes of homelessness, including the need for stable, long-term housing with supportive services.

In a rural county like Tehama, where housing resources are already scarce and funding is stretched thin, any diversion of funds away from permanent housing compromises our ability to make real, lasting progress. SB 16 threatens to unravel the gains we've made and imposes a one-size-fits-all solution that does not reflect the complexities of our local context.

We urge the Legislature to reject SB 16 and instead continue supporting a comprehensive, locally informed approach that prioritizes permanent housing and respects the collaborative frameworks established through the HHAP program.

Inappropriate State Oversight

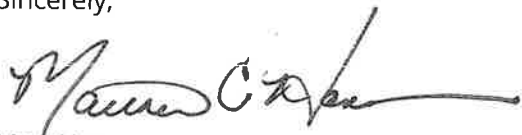
Finally and most importantly, SB 16 creates an unprecedented and inappropriate state review of county budgets by allowing HCD to review county financial documents to determine what level of funding a county can afford to provide for the shelter funding obligation. This is a unique and highly concerning accountability mechanism that reflects a lack of understanding about the complex nature of county budgets. County Boards must navigate federal and state mandates and priorities along with all of their local community needs to make difficult budget decisions that best serve their residents. It is unacceptable to give a state department authority to overrule those local decisions and decision-making processes. Though homelessness is a shared issue across the state each jurisdiction is unique and only the local people know the best needs, not one size fits all legislation. Local governments need to be endowed with policy and funding that meet local needs. Bureaucratic oversight increases costs and reduces efficiency and effectiveness, and often leads to fiscal waste thereby exacerbating affordability in the state of California.

In Tehama County, the budget process is an extensive and collaborative effort that involves careful coordination between county departments, public input, and oversight by the Board of Supervisors. These stakeholders know and understand the unique needs of Tehama County

residents better than anyone. Each year, the County Administrator's Office works with department heads to assess needs, align resources, and develop a balanced budget that reflects both mandatory obligations and community priorities. Limited discretionary funds must be spread across critical services including public safety, health and human services, roads, and infrastructure—leaving little flexibility for new, unfunded mandates. Allowing the state to unilaterally assess and dictate local affordability without context threatens to upend this careful balancing act and could result in cuts to other essential services that our residents rely on.

Tehama County is always a willing partner in finding solutions to provide further funding for homeless response, increase accountability, and modify our state's approach to homelessness to better serve individuals throughout the state. However, this legislation fails to meet those goals and, as a result, we must strongly oppose SB 16.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Hansen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Hansen,
Tehama County Supervisors, Chair
District 4 Supervisor

cc: The Honorable Catherine Blakespear, California State Senate
Members, Senate Housing Committee
Alison Hughes, Chief Consultant, Senate Housing Committee
Kerry Yoshida, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Misa Lennox, Consultant, Office of the Senate President pro Tempore