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## Assembly District 54 Affordable Housing and Homelessness Questionnaire

Dear Assembly District 54 Candidates,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our Assembly District 54 Candidate Forum focused on Housing and Homelessness policies on Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> from 5:00pm – 6:00pm. Our Steering Committee is pleased that all candidates have confirmed their attendance. This means that we won't be able to delve as deeply into some questions we'd like to know your stance on. As a solution, we thought we would provide you the opportunity to answer the following questions in a candidate questionnaire. We will distribute your answers to all registered candidate forum attendees as well as share on our organizational websites and social media platforms.

We see this forum not only as an opportunity for us to learn more about you, but for you to learn more about our organizations and priorities. Thank you for considering this request, and **please submit your answers by Wednesday, April 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:00pm.**

**Candidate Question:** The main obstacles to building affordable housing in LA are:

- (1) land costs;
- (2) high per-unit cost of housing development;
- (3) protracted review, permitting and funding processes;
- (4) identifying land or buildings suitable for housing development or renovation; and
- (5) residents' fears of "those people" (e.g., mentally ill, people of color, etc.), "diminishing property values" and "safety concerns."

How would you address each of these obstacles? What specific proposals do you have to ensure that affordable housing development costs are contained?

## ISAAC BRYAN CANDIDATE RESPONSE

Housing is a human right, and the calls to “cancel the rent” are compelling and urgent. They speak to the overwhelming crisis of affordability that is gripping working people across our communities. I hear that call, and I understand the helpless feeling of not knowing where the money will come from to pay the rent. While I walked across the stage at my graduation from UCLA to accept the award for Student of the Year in my Masters in Public Policy program, I simultaneously didn’t know if I would find my locks changed when I went home.

Even though I’m a renter myself, I also understand that many landlords aren’t slumlords or multimillion dollar companies – some are owners renting out rooms to pay their mortgage too, and many have lost hours or jobs themselves. That’s why it’s important that the solution to this crisis be one that includes support for renters, first and foremost, but also support for homeowners struggling to pay their bills due to the pandemic, and one that does not result in a wave of foreclosures on rental properties, which would leave them in the hands of even less-engaged banks and investors.

I support long-term, structural solutions at scale to address our housing crisis, but we do need an immediate injection of support for our renters, NOW. And we have the funds to do this: The State currently has a one-time surplus of \$15 billion and is set to receive approximately \$20 billion in support from the Federal Government. In addition to extending the ban on evictions and homeowner foreclosures, we need to offer direct support to defray the mounting rent debt that tenants owe and ensure that their struggles today do not become crushing burdens on them and their families for years to come.

The housing crisis in California is undeniable, but like most political crises, it represents the failure of the policy choices we have made in the past. We must do better. Median housing prices and rents continue to rise while wages remain stagnant in many cities. In Los Angeles, we have more vacancies than unhoused residents, yet homelessness continues to spread across the county. The number of Californians that are unhoused or housing insecure shows the severity of the housing crisis and underscores the need for immediate action. I support a multifaceted approach to solve the housing crisis in Assembly District 54 and across California. I support responsible upzoning that meets the demands of multifamily housing, while also preserving historically BIPOC communities. I also support incentives to reduce the vacancy rate, investing in permanent supportive housing, and holding municipalities accountable for meeting local needs for affordable units. I will support Assemblymember Alex Lee’s social housing bill, AB 387, which creates the policy infrastructure needed to stabilize renters markets across the state. The combination of these efforts will begin to provide relief for the housing crisis.

Every time we begin plans to house the unhoused or significantly increase affordable housing, we face existing residents’ safety concerns or fears of “those people” and diminishing property values. These attitudes are often a major hurdle to solving one of our most urgent humanitarian crises. My life’s work focuses on ending poverty and lifting up the neediest among us. There’s no reason the sixth largest economy in the world cannot guarantee housing to our people. There are intersectional ways of approaching existing residents’ fears. We must prioritize investment in disadvantaged communities and people. And as we reprioritize public funding away from militarized law enforcement and into systems of care – housing, mental health, jobs, healthcare, and education – we will reap the rewards of reduced crime, less homelessness, and a larger percentage of our population on track to succeed.

**Tenant Protections:** I will work to create a housing system that protects tenants and owners equally. I support right to counsel, rent control, and repealing the Ellis and Costa-Hawkins Acts. After their repeal, we need to replace them with policies that stabilize rents and ensure new developments are meeting the demands of the renting market.

**Homeowner Protections:** I support mortgage cancellations to protect homeowners struggling to make mortgage payments throughout the pandemic. As Assemblymember, I will support policies that allow homeowners autonomy over who they rent their property to while also ensuring that our policies do not allow for predatory evictions.

**Right to counsel:** Right to counsel in eviction proceedings is critical in protecting low-income renters that likely would not be able to afford hiring counsel. Passing a right-to-counsel law will protect tenants against predatory evictions, lower housing insecurity, and keep people from falling into homelessness. I will support AB 1487, which will fund free legal services to tenants, but it does not go far enough.

**Occupancy Incentives:** I support incentives to keep units occupied. Vacant units don't help landlords, and they don't help tenants. It's important to build a coalition to ensure that this vital measure is not just introduced but enacted. I also understand that letting the perfect be the enemy of the good has often been the death of progressive policy movements. I will support bills like AB 528, which allows the sale of nuisance properties to nonprofits if they have been vacant for a year.

**Tenant anti-harassment:** Many tenants have been harassed throughout the pandemic to pay overdue rents despite the eviction moratorium. These instances illustrate how critical anti-harassment protections are, as they can lower predatory and illegal evictions. I support AB 838, which will offer tenants additional protection from landlords and municipalities who ignore code violations.

There are a number of other bills currently moving through the Legislature that are important steps to addressing each of the challenges of housing affordability. We have to think hard about each one, but they are important guideposts along our path towards sustainable affordability.

**Please submit this candidate questionnaire to us by Wednesday, April 21st by 1:00pm and note our word count of 1,000 words (which is approximately 2 pages single spaced).**