March 30th, 2023

The Honorable Marie Alvarado-Gil
Chair, Senate Human Services Committee
102O N Street, Room 521
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 37 (Caballero) Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities Housing Stability Act of 2023 – Support

Dear Chair Alvarado-Gil,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), one of the state’s foremost grassroots senior and disability advocacy organizations, representing over 1 million Californians, is proud to support SB 37 (Caballero), which seeks to provide housing subsidies to older adults and adults with disabilities, who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Older adults are among those most at risk for crime victimization, including sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking, homicide and hate crimes motivated by bias against people with disabilities including disabilities caused by aging. Being homeless adds to their vulnerability. Older Californians or those with disabilities, on inadequate fixed incomes such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), are unable to cover the rapidly rising rents. It has been reported that the fastest growing homeless population in California is those 75 years of age and older. It has been estimated that for older Californians (at least 65 years of age) homelessness will triple between 2017 and 2030. What we are seeing will only get worse unless something is done. People with disabilities comprise approximately 43% of those experiencing homelessness, and African American households are more than five times as likely to experience homelessness when compared to the general California population.

A key goal of the California Master Plan for Aging is to prevent and end older adult homelessness. The data show it is increasing and it is projected to continue to increase. Currently there are no comprehensive state programs that provide long-term housing subsidies for older and disabled adults who are on fixed incomes. The Federal Housing Choice-Vouchers and other Federal subsidized housing programs often take years for applicants and accommodate only a small percentage of eligible applicants.

SB 37 would create such a program and provide a rent subsidy targeted to those older adults and adults with disabilities who are homeless or are at high risk of experiencing homelessness. The bill will establish OAADHSA within the department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to administer and offer competitive grants to nonprofit organizations, continuums of care, and other organizations. HCD will select

CARA/ 1675 7th St. PO Box 23754/ Oakland, CA 94623/ 510-662-4086/ www.californiaalliance.org
grantees with the resources, expertise, and cultural specificity to provide assistance to households experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Grants will prioritize communities in which a high proportion of the renters face cost burdens.

Grantees will provide subsidies to help older adults and adults with disabilities remain housed, with subsidies covering the difference between 30% of a person’s household income and the unit’s reasonable rent. Such subsidies will likely prevent and end homelessness for thousands of older and disabled adults. Studies show low-income renters accessing housing subsidies are able to remain housed or exit homelessness for good.

For these reasons, SB 37 (Caballero) would further CARA goals: affording Seniors resources to age with grace, dignity and independence are CARA’s foundational principles. Assisting our most vulnerable to remain in their homes, affording them a safe place that protects them physically, emotionally, mentally and financially creates the space for this to happen and we believe will ensure a safer, more accessible and inclusive California. We are proud to support SB 37 (Caballero), and encourage your “aye” vote when it is heard in the Senate Human Services Committee.

Sincerely,

Hene Kelly
Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)

Keith Umemoto
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)