



AB 1472 (Leno): The California Healthy Places Act

Our health is largely determined by where we live, work, and play. Understanding the critical connection between health and land use, community groups have begun conducting “health impact assessments” to shape healthy planning. The California Healthy Places Act would provide technical assistance and grants to community organizations and local health agencies to evaluate land-use planning decisions to ensure that they create communities that promote health, through the new California Department of Public Health. This legislation builds on existing innovative initiatives at the local level, and provides community organizations with resources and tools to have a voice in planning their communities.

Having a Stronger Voice in Planning Decisions

Research shows that how neighborhoods and cities are designed affects numerous health conditions such as heart disease, asthma, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, depression, injuries, and some cancers. According to the Institute of Medicine, improving health in the 21st century will require new approaches to environmental health, including strategies to deal with unhealthy buildings, urban congestion, poor housing, poor nutrition, and environmentally-related stress. Health impact assessments can provide important evidence to back up community positions and concerns. These assessments also give communities a direct role in asking and answering questions important to healthy growth, whether those questions come from an environmental justice, environmental health, economic justice or other community perspective. Overall, health impact assessments support a stronger community voice in planning decisions.

A Real Opportunity

The Healthy Places Act provides community organizations with an opportunity to shape a state program to support their work on planning. Community organizations will be able to inform and participate in the development of guidance for health impact assessment and also take leadership on conducting health impact assessments on priority local issues and decisions.

Planning for a Healthy California

Mechanisms for community organizations to participate in city planning must be expanded. AB 1472 would provide community organizations with the resources to conduct health impact assessments, increasing their role in planning their communities. Send in your letter of support for AB 1472 to the bill author, Assemblymember Mark Leno

SUPPORT AB 1472 for a healthy, thriving California.

Sponsors: California Pan Ethnic Health Network, Human Impact Partners, Latino Issues Forum, California Black Health Network

For more information contact: Martin Martinez, (510) 832-1160, mmartinez@cpehn.org or Sarah Olivia Mercer, (415) 547-9124, sarah@lif.org.

Template Letter in Support of AB 1472

For an electronic copy, please contact Samara Azam (sazam@cpehn.org).

[Date]

The Honorable Mark Leno
California State Assembly
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RE: AB 1472 (Leno): The Healthy Places Act – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Leno:

Our health is largely determined by where we live, work, and play. In order for our communities to be healthy, we need to live in healthy communities. For that reason we support AB 1472, which would charge the California Department of Public Health to provide technical assistance and grants to local public health agencies and community organizations to evaluate land-use planning decisions to ensure that they create communities that promote health. This legislation builds on innovative “Health Impact Assessment” initiatives already taking place at the local level.

[Information on your organization]

Too many Californians experience avoidable injuries or suffer from unnecessarily from chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and asthma. The resulting human and economic toll is largely preventable. In 2000, California spent \$500 million on hospitalizations due to asthma. According to the Institute of Medicine, improving health in the 21st century will require new approaches to environmental health, including strategies to deal with unhealthy buildings, urban congestion, poor housing, poor nutrition, and environmentally-related stress.

Research shows how we design neighborhoods and cities affects numerous health conditions such as heart disease, asthma, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, depression, injuries, and some cancers. A healthy environment means that children should have playgrounds, parks, and schools within walking distance of their homes. Streets should be safe for walking and bicycling. Nutritious food should be available in every neighborhood. Housing should be affordable and free of hazards. It seems common sense that major decisions regarding development and planning should be made with the public’s health in mind. However, mechanisms and mandates for public health to participate in planning decisions do not exist, and city and regional planning agencies do not have the resources or expertise to assess the health impacts of planning.

Your bill will change that and we thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Cc: Martin Martinez, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network: Fax: (510) 832-1175