

16. Providing a letter to the Regional Public Affairs Manager of the League of California Cities, the California Legislature Position Letter Portal, Senator Valladares, and Assemblyman Carrillo opposing SB 634 (Perez)

Recommendation:

That the Honorable City Council authorize the Mayor to execute and submit a letter to the Regional Public Affairs Manager of the League of California Cities, the California Legislature Position Letter Portal, Senator Valladares, and Assemblyman Carrillo formally opposing SB 634 (Perez).



Item Number: 16

City Council / Board of Directors

Written Communications

Meeting of: May 6, 2025

Submitted By:

Keith C. Metzler, City Manager

Subject:

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Recommendation:

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Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

Strategic Plan Goal:

This item affects the City's ability to address homelessness within the City and, therefore, relates to Strategic Goal D – Reduce Homelessness.

Background:

In February 2025, Senator Perez introduced Senate Bill 634, Homelessness: Civil and Criminal Penalties. The intent of SB 634 (Perez), as amended on March 26, 2025, is to limit the ability of local and state governments to respond to homelessness by prohibiting the adoption of any regulations or policies that would impose civil or criminal penalties on unhoused individuals. Without the ability to pursue these penalties, the City will be severely restricted in responding to and reducing health and safety concerns within the community caused by the homeless population.

Since 2017, the City has expanded its efforts to reduce homelessness. This includes forming a Homeless Engagement Team, with four full-time Homeless Engagement Officers dedicated to assisting our homeless population with finding shelter and utilizing

local services. A Homelessness Solutions Task Force was also created by the Victorville City Council to find solutions to homelessness in the City. Additionally, the City established the Wellness Center, a low-barrier facility offering wrap-around services to homeless individuals. The Wellness Center was opened in December 2023, costing approximately \$40 million to build and having an annual cost of \$3 million to operate. The Code Compliance Department relies on the ability to enforce the City's municipal code to address trespassing and homeless encampments, and to connect unhoused individuals to shelter, recuperative care, and medical services, such as those provided by the Wellness Center.

Discussion:

One of the City's Strategic Plan goals, Strategic Goal D, is to reduce homelessness. The Code Compliance Department has been actively working toward achieving this goal by implementing a number of programs and remedies designed to assist the unhoused population. By utilizing a citation and placement approach, the Homeless Engagement Team builds a relationship with homeless individuals that assists with connecting them to resources and services that improve their wellbeing. The City has a responsibility to uphold the rights of individuals as well as the broader community and SB 634 (Perez) would hinder these efforts. SB 634 (Perez) would create a barrier to maintaining the safety and cleanliness of the community, and protecting public spaces and local businesses from unlawful activity. By ensuring due process is followed before imposing a penalty or fine for violation of the municipal code, the City is able to remedy issues regarding homelessness in a meaningful way.

An Executive Order was signed by Governor Newsom in November 2024 encouraging local governments to adopt policies addressing homeless encampments at the risk of losing access to state funding targeting homelessness. In 2024 the City received nearly \$6.6 million in grant funding to address the needs of the homeless population. If SB 634 (Perez) is passed, local governments will be stripped of their authority to enforce strategies aimed at reducing homelessness within their communities, directly contradicting the Governor's Executive Order and impeding the City's efforts of addressing homelessness.

The League of California Cities, along with a broad coalition of local governments, public safety leaders, and businesses, strongly oppose SB 634 (Perez). Per the League of California Cities, "SB 634 severely limits cities' ability to respond to the growing homelessness crisis in communities across California by prohibiting local governments from adopting any regulation, policy, or guidance that imposes civil or criminal penalties on a person experiencing homelessness". Therefore, the League is requesting cities send a letter opposing SB 634 (Perez) to the Regional Public Affairs Manager of the League of California Cities, the California Legislature Position Letter Portal, Senator Valladares, and Assemblyman Carrillo.

SB 634 (Perez) would have significant negative impacts on the operations of the Code Compliance Department, jeopardize the possibility of receiving state funding to address homelessness, and put the health and safety of the residents and businesses in the City

of Victorville at risk. Staff recommends the Council authorize the Mayor to execute and submit a letter to the Regional Public Affairs Manager of the League of California Cities, the California Legislature Position Letter Portal Senator Valladares, and Assemblyman Carrillo formally opposing SB 634 (Perez).

Attachments: A. Formal Letter of Opposition

ATTACHMENT A



April 21, 2025

The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
Chair, Senate Local Government Committee
California State Capitol, Room 407
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 634 (Pérez) Homelessness: civil and criminal penalties
Notice of OPPOSITION (As Amended 03/26/25)**

Dear Senator Durazo,

The City of Victorville must respectfully **oppose SB 634 (Pérez)**, which would prohibit local jurisdictions from adopting or enforcing ordinances to address homelessness. While we recognize the bill's intent, SB 634 would severely limit cities' ability to respond to the growing homelessness crisis in communities across California.

Cities are implementing balanced approaches that protect both the rights of individuals experiencing homelessness and the broader community's needs for clean, safe, and accessible public spaces. SB 634 hinders this progress by prohibiting local governments from adopting any regulation, policy, or guidance that imposes civil or criminal penalties on a person experiencing homelessness. By eliminating all enforcement mechanisms, SB 634 gives people the right to stand, sit, lay, sleep, or put up a tent in any public place.

The City of Victorville will be severely restricted in responding to and reducing health and safety concerns within the community caused by the homeless population. Since 2017, the City has expanded its efforts to reduce homelessness. This includes creating a Homeless Engagement Team, with four full-time Homeless Engagement Officers dedicated to assisting our homeless population with finding shelter and utilizing local services. A Homelessness Solutions Task Force was created by the Victorville City Council to find solutions to homelessness in the City. Additionally, the Victorville Wellness Center was established in December 2023. The Victorville Wellness Center, a low-barrier facility, was a \$40 million project, with an annual operating cost of \$3 million, with the sole purpose of providing unhoused individuals with wrap-around services including shelter, recuperative care, and medical services. The City of Victorville also offers local business owners the option to file an annual Trespass Agreement with our Code Compliance Department, allowing the initiation of enforcement efforts. With this annual agreement in place, City of Victorville Law Enforcement Officers have authorization to act as the business owner's agent in order to prosecute any person engaging in unlawful activity on their property.

Cities have been sued by business owners for allowing encampments to block access to businesses and by disability rights advocates over encampments that have obstructed sidewalks and public spaces. Without the ability to use civil or criminal enforcement remedies, cities would face increased legal liability and more importantly, have no meaningful way to respond to urgent health and safety concerns. The City of

Victorville recognizes that we must remain focused on connecting unhoused residents to housing and services, but cities also need basic tools to meet their legal obligations and protect public spaces.

SB 634 also directly contradicts cities' efforts to address encampments in response to the Governor's November 2024 [executive order](#). The order directed state departments and agencies to adopt policies to address homeless encampments on state properties and encouraged local governments to adopt similar policies or risk losing access to state homelessness funding. Cities want to help the state to realize our shared vision of reducing homelessness and supporting our most vulnerable residents. However, SB 634 leaves cities without any enforcement tools, hindering cities' ability to carry out the Governor's directive and jeopardizing state funding cities receive to address homelessness.

Local jurisdictions are already working within a complex and evolving legal landscape, including recent federal court decisions like *Johnson v. Grants Pass*, which clarified constitutional limits on how cities can address homelessness through enforcement actions. In response to the Grants Pass ruling, the Governor stated:

*“Today’s ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court provides state and local officials the **definitive authority** to implement and **enforce** policies to clear unsafe encampments from our streets. This decision removes the **legal ambiguities** that have **tied the hands** of local officials for years and **limited their ability** to deliver on common-sense measures to protect the safety and well-being of our communities.”*

SB 634 directly undermines this decision by stripping local governments of the authority to tailor enforcement strategies to their unique circumstances. It also disregards the years of legal effort cities have invested to gain the clarity now provided by the Court.

The City of Victorville urges the Legislature to support policies that empower local governments to act with compassion and urgency — not tie their hands behind their backs. SB 634 does not reflect the nuanced, community-led solutions that are showing promise across the state. For these reasons, the City of Victorville must **oppose SB 634 (Pérez)**.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Becerra
Mayor

cc. Senator Valladares & Assembly Member Carrillo
Laura Varela, League Regional Public Affairs Manager (via email)
League of California Cities, cityletters@cacities.org