Please send a support letter by March 10 – On your letter head
Sample Support Letter – Right to Rest Act of 2015, SB 608 (Liu)
Send by Email to: Pboden@wraphome.org, Jbartholow@wclp.org and Suzanne.Reed@sen.ca.gov

Date _____Please send by March 10

Honorable Carol Liu
California State Senate
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Right to Rest Act of 2015, SB 608 (Liu) - Support

Dear Senator Liu,

[**Name of Your Organization**] supports your bill, **SB 608,** which will end the criminalization of rest and accompanying violations of basic human and civil rights for all people, regardless of their housing status. In doing so, **SB 608** would encourage the diversion of expenditures on citing and jailing people for resting in public spaces on efforts to prevent homelessness.

California, with only 12 percent of the country's overall population but 22 percent of its homeless population and 25 percent of its homeless veteran population, is at the epicenter of the criminalization of homelessness. According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, California cities are substantially more likely than cities in other states to ban rest. While only 33 percent of non-California cities restrict this activity, 74 percent of California cities ban the practice.

Researchers from the Policy Advocacy Clinic at the University of California at Berkeley Law School analyzed the prevalence of these types of municipal codes restricting rest and sharing of food in 58 California cities for its report "California's New Vagrancy Laws: The Growing Enactment and Enforcement of Anti-Homeless Laws in the Golden State." Researchers identified over 500 municipal laws criminalizing standing, sitting, resting, sleeping and sharing of food in public places as well as laws making it illegal to ask for money, nearly nine laws per city, on average. The study also found that the number of ordinances targeting those behaviors rose along with the rise in homelessness following the sharp decline of federal funding for affordable housing that was cut in the early 1980s and again with the Great Recession in 2008.

Criminalizing practices which are not criminal not only worsens the condition of people without homes, but also narrows their opportunities to escape homelessness. By acknowledging the failure of municipal laws that criminalize poverty and homelessness, we hope that passage of this legislation will improve the focus on more humane and effective responses to homelessness.

The Right to Rest Act of 2015 will end the practice of citing and imprisoning Californians for resting, sharing food or practicing religion in public. **Optional: Include 2 sentences about why your organization cares.**

[**Name of Your Organization**] supports **SB 608** and thanks you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Your Name and Title

cc: Paul Boden, Western Regional Advocacy Project (Co-Sponsor)
Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)