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May 20, 2017

The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva
California State Assembly
State Capitol - Room # 6012
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: AB 572 (Quirk-Silva) Alcoholism or drug abuse treatment facilities: Orange County pilot program. –SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Quirk-Silva,

The Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC) would like to express its support for Assembly Bill 572 (Quirk-Silva), a measure that would create a voluntary pilot program for the County of Orange to fund and house a Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Complaint Analyst within the County. ACC-OC has sponsored this bill in an effort to increase the oversight of noncompliant drug and alcohol residences, which will ultimately result in better quality care for patients. At a time when California cities are struggling with an overwhelming number of unmonitored sober living facilities, this bill will create an important regulatory tool and a welcome resource for cities.

In recent years, Orange County has seen a massive increase in sober living homes and facilities. Facilities must be licensed through the DHCS when at least one of the following services is provided: detoxification, group sessions, individual sessions, educational sessions, or alcoholism or drug abuse recovery or treatment planning. Sober living homes are considered single family homes and are treated as such, as long as they maintain a group living situation of six people or under and do not offer any treatment to patients through any of the listed methodologies. Overall, California has nearly 2,000 licensed facilities and countless unlicensed homes – an alarming 15% of which are saturated in Orange County. As of October 2016, there were 83 licensed drug and alcohol treatment facilities and 95 unlicensed sober living homes within the City of Costa Mesa alone.

There is no denying the necessity of providing treatment options for those in our community struggling with drug and alcohol abuse. In 2016, fatal drug overdoses hit a 10-year high in Orange County, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has called the national spike in drug abuse and overdose deaths a national epidemic. The issue lies instead with those seizing on the lack of oversight to open sub-standard facilities, and the inability of cities to ensure that the facilities within their jurisdictions are functioning properly.

Currently, DHCS is the only entity that has the authority to enforce sober living facility regulations and inspect noncompliant homes in response to a complaint. Therefore, when issues arise, a city's only recourse is often to file a complaint with DHCS. According to DHCS, there are only 16 Investigative Complaint Analysts handling the entirety of the



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State's noncompliant sober living home and facility investigations — all of whom are located in Sacramento. This has caused a backlog in complaint processes, investigation response, and general monitoring. AB 572 would work to alleviate the backlog and increase local control by creating a voluntary pilot program for Orange County to self-fund and house a DHCS Complaint Analyst within the County. This would provide cities with a much-needed, local resource for handling noncompliant treatment facilities, and ensuring the safety of patients.

The ACC-OC is a non-profit organization that proudly represents the interests of the 34 Orange County cities and the County of Orange. ACC-OC serves as a resource for elected officials and municipalities, focusing on three key initiatives: education that empowers, policy that is collaborative, and advocacy that is service-oriented. We are committed to finding fair solutions to challenges that affect our cities, and this bill is a commonsense approach towards that effort. For this and the reasons described above, the Association of California Cities – Orange County is proud to support and sponsor AB 572.

Should you have any questions about our positon or about ACC-OC, please contact Diana Coronado, ACC-OC's Legislative Affairs Director, at (714) 953-1300 or at dcoronado@accoc.org. We hope to be a resource to you, and we look forward to working with you and your office on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Heather Stratman
Chief Executive Officer
Association of California Cities – Orange County