



500 S. Main Street, #410, Orange, CA 92868 | P: 714.953.1300 | F: 714.953.1302 | www.ACCOC.org

February 27, 2017

The Honorable Jim Wood
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-000

RE: AB 285 (Melendez) Drug and alcohol free residences. – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Wood

The Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC) would like to express its support for Assembly Bill 285 (Melendez), this bill will be heard in the Assembly Health Committee on March 21st. The measure would allow, what are currently known as, “sober living home” operators the ability to apply for a state recognized certification, dependent on quality standards and regulations set by nationally recognized substance abuse treatment organizations. This bill would also define a sober living home environment as a “drug and alcohol free residence”, for purposes of certification registration. ACC-OC is supportive of bills that will work to increase the oversight of noncompliant drug and alcohol residences, resulting in better quality care for patients, and the creation of enforcement resources for cities.

AB 285 will define a “drug and alcohol free” residence as a residential property that is operated as a cooperative living arrangement. This living arrangement would provide a clean and sober environment for persons recovering from alcoholism and drug dependencies, seeking a living environment that supports personal recovery. This bill would further authorize licensed, and or certification registration abilities to drug and alcohol free residences in an effort to provide broad access to coordinated substance use treatment services. A structured and certified drug and alcohol free residence has been proven to provide a higher quality of care and standard of living for its patients – which this bill seeks to ensure.

Additionally, AB 285 would require that state agencies referring defendants and patients to a drug and alcohol free residence only refer a person to a facility that has been certified or licensed, and registered on the internet web site of the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). This language very closely embodies the spirit of the bill that ACC-OC sponsored, last year, (AB 2772, Chang), which focused on addressing probationary and paroled populations. This is an important component in the reduction



of recidivism and the increase of rehabilitation among patients appointed to this treatment. We are glad to see the issue continuing to be championed.

AB 285 is a step in the right direction for cities and patients. ACC-OC would like to emphasize the need and importance for the State to work with local governments to ensure that the newly created licensing mechanism functions in conjunction with local laws, as described in the bill. Cities across California have received very little help from the State in protecting themselves and their residents from the negative impacts caused by noncompliant sober living homes. Legislation that specifically defends the local ordinances of municipalities, and allows cities the ability to participate in sober living homes safety, is key in combating this decades' long challenge. Currently, cities are unable to address the concerns of their constituents or guarantee quality care for patients within their communities without the State's intervention or a legislative correction. The ACC-OC remains committed to finding a solution to the issues related to sober living homes and facilities through the support of this measure and our own legislative efforts.

The complexities of sober living homes are not unique to patients, residents, or a specific region – these problems are felt statewide. For this and the reasons described above, the Association of California Cities – Orange County is proud to support AB 285. Should you have any questions on our position or about the ACC-OC please contact Diana Coronado, ACC-OC's Legislative Affairs Director, at dcoronado@accor.org or at (714) 953-1300.

Sincerely,



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

cc:

The Hon. Melissa Melendez
Members, Assembly Health Committee
Orange County State Legislative Delegation
ACC-OC Board of Directors
ACC-OC Legislative & Regulatory Committee