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WOMEN'S
LAW CENTER

January 13, 2016

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The Honorable Connie Leyva
Senator, 20th District
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 384 (Leyva) – Support

Dear Senator Leyva:

The California Women's Law Center (CWLC) is writing in support of Senate Bill 384 (Leyva), which would require that a percentage of the funds allocated for veteran housing be reserved for underserved veterans. CWLC strongly supports SB 384 because it will designate funds for housing our most vulnerable population of veterans, women and single parents.

California has over 180,000 women veterans, 1 in 5 of whom were sexually assaulted or harassed during their service. These women veterans face enormous obstacles in returning to civilian life, including homelessness. In fact, the number of women veterans identifying as homeless increased by more than 140% from 2006 to 2010.

Despite the homelessness problem among women veterans, there is a dearth of adequate housing options to meet their needs. Most transitional housing providers who serve women do not house children and those that do often limit the number or have age restrictions. Women veterans who find housing are often placed in facilities with mostly male veterans, creating safety risks for a population vulnerable to sexual assault. (Homeless women veterans experience sexual assault at up to 12 times the rate of women generally.)

Since 1989, CWLC has worked to break down barriers and advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy and education. With more women veterans than ever, CWLC is dedicated to advocating for their unique needs, including housing. In fact, CWLC currently represents a woman veteran with Military Sexual Trauma (MST)-related disabilities, who is suing her supportive housing facility for violating the Fair Housing Act. This week, a federal judge issued an order in this case stating that placing women veterans with anxiety caused by MST-related disabilities in apartments near each other *would not* violate prohibitions against sex-based segregation in housing and would further, not alter, a supported living program for homeless veterans with disabilities.

Women veterans have sacrificed so much for our country. CWLC strongly supports SB 384 because it will create safe and adequate housing options that honor their service.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler
Executive Director