

## NV Legislature 2021

### Summary of Bills Passed

On Monday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, the Nevada Legislature adjourned. The Nevada Homeless Alliance and the Policy Council on Homelessness were active throughout the session to advance our policy priorities. These activities included direct and grassroots lobbying and working with partner coalitions and organizations to develop and/or support key bills aiming to address equitable housing access (AB317, SB254), increase affordable housing production (AB331, AB334), expand tenant protections (AB486, AB141, AB161) and improve access to services for youth experiencing homelessness (AB197, SB354). Several of these bills were passed and are on their way to the Governor for signature. A breakdown of these bills is below. However, there were several key bills that were not passed and were killed behind closed doors without an opportunity to be voted on in Committee and without transparency and accountability to stakeholders. There is much work to do in the interim to work together and ensure our federal, state and local elected officials continue to hear from us on the urgent and comprehensive policy actions needed to address and end homelessness.

**Here is a quick breakdown of some of the key bills that passed through the NV Legislature and are on their way to the Governor's desk.**

**AB486: Eviction Protections and relief for small landlords.** Requires the court to stay eviction proceedings when the tenant has applied for and is awaiting an approval or denial for rental assistance. Provides option for courts to stay eviction proceedings to assign mediation for non-payment of rent cases. Requires landlords to include information about alternative resolution and rental assistance in eviction notices. Creates a landlord assistance program that will allow small landlords to apply for and access rental assistance funds directly.

**Why this matters:** AB486 will help keep Nevadans in their homes and ensure rental assistance is utilized to prevent evictions and repay landlords. Despite the herculean efforts to stand up rental assistance programs in the middle of a pandemic, the distribution cannot occur faster than the lightning-fast eviction process. AB486 marries the rental assistance process with eviction legal proceedings to ensure that the federal dollars are utilized and exhausted prior to an eviction being granted. During the pandemic, some landlords have also refused to accept a tenant's rental assistance and have still evicted the tenant. AB486 will allow a tenant to defend against an eviction if they can prove a landlord is refusing to accept rental assistance that was available.

**AB141: Allows for automatic eviction sealing in summary eviction cases that occur during the COVID-19 crisis due to non-payment of rent.**

**Why this matters:** There is a link between homelessness and eviction records. Even one eviction record can cause long-term housing instability. This policy will mitigate some risk of homelessness for Nevadans facing eviction due to the current economic crisis. It is estimated anywhere from 250,000 to 500,000 Nevadans may be at risk of eviction following the end of our Eviction Moratoria (NV Moratorium expired on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2021).

**AB197: Expands Medical Access Rights for Homeless Youth.** Prior Nevada law required unaccompanied homeless minors to have been living on their own away from their parents or legal guardians for a minimum of four months prior to being able to consent to critical medical services. AB197 eliminates this time requirement, and expands the types of health services that homeless minors

can access to also include dental and mental health care, and creates a clear process for medical providers to verify unaccompanied minors' homeless status.

**Why this matters:** Ensuring youth experiencing homelessness can access the medical and behavioral healthcare services they need without an arbitrary waiting period of four months is important for their health and overall stability. This policy also simplifies the homeless verification process for healthcare providers, which improves their willingness to provide services to this vulnerable population.

**SB354: School discipline reform for homeless students.** Requires the Department of Education to develop a statewide framework for restorative justice and requires School Districts to assess the students living situation (homeless status) during each incident of school discipline to deploy restorative justice and connect student to services as an alternative to out-of-school suspension.

**Why this matters:** Homeless students do not have a home to go to for off-campus suspensions and school campuses provide important connections to safety-nets, such as meals. Establishing a requirement to assess the living situation of a student prior to assigning discipline will help with identifying students experiencing precarious housing situations so they may be referred to the appropriate social and educational services they need.