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**“WORKING TOGETHER TO
KEEP CALIFORNIA STRONG.”**





Dear {name} -

Nearly 100,000 SEIU Local 1000 workers employed by the State of California are fighting to reach a contract agreement that reflects our shared values. But unless we do so soon, our members — who are **presently losing approximately \$300 per paycheck — will face this bi-weekly shortfall until the end of the year.** We're counting on your help to reach an agreement that helps our state workers continue to provide the essential services all Californians need.

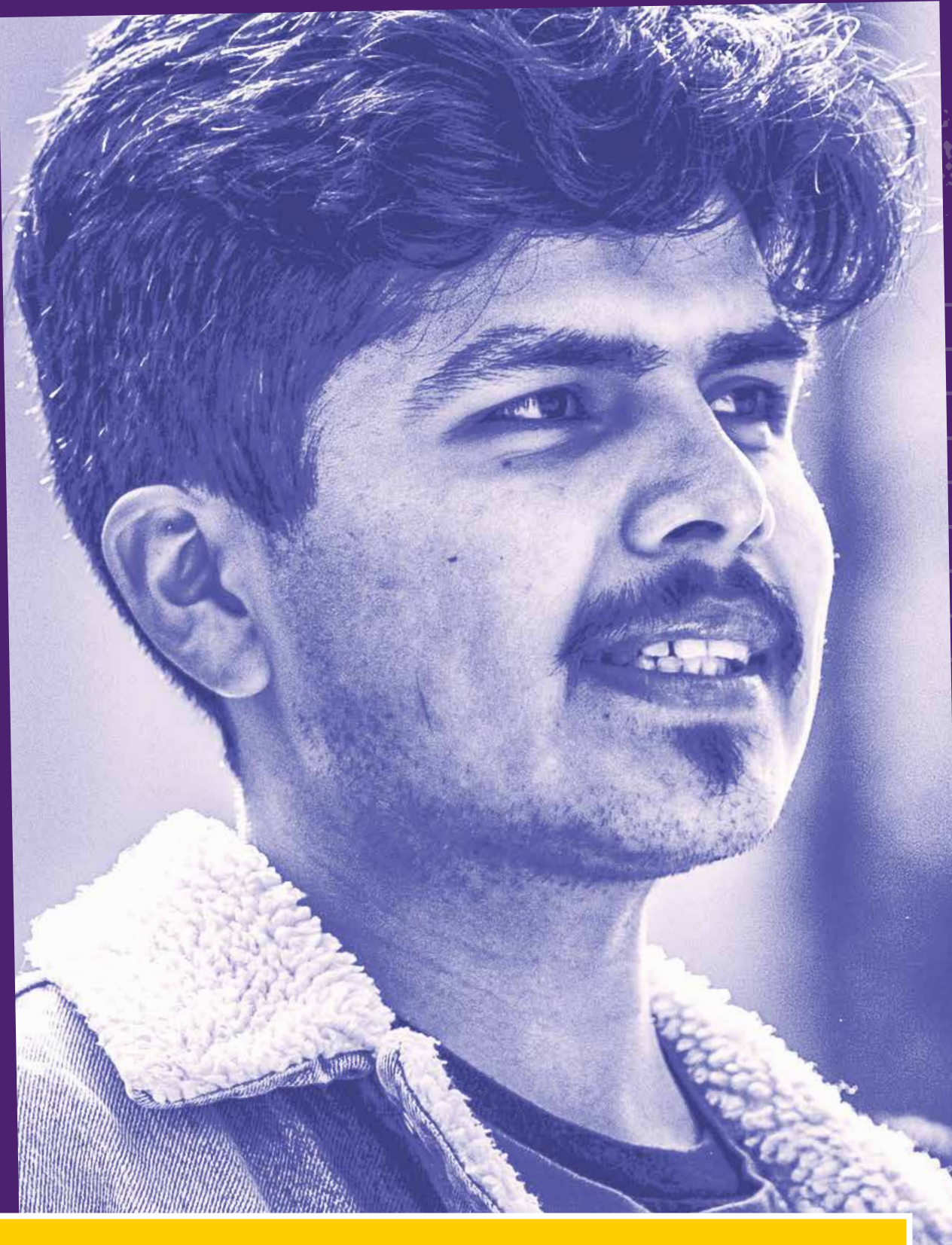
In order for us to collectively continue combating the challenges' Californians face — from climate change to ensuring accessible and affordable health care to improving our transportation infrastructure — it's crucial to have workers who can effectively implement these vital programs and policies. But without a new contract, many of these workers' economic futures, and our ability to retain them as employees, are in jeopardy.

After years of being paid below market rates and the increasing cost of living in California, more and more dedicated civil service workers are being driven out of the middle class. In fact, over 30,000 of our workers struggle to make ends meet, including thousands who cannot even afford to rent a one-bedroom apartment.

The small cost of living adjustments currently being offered as part of a general salary increase would roll back wages to pre-pandemic status. Should we fail to rectify this situation within the next week, there will not be sufficient time to ratify and pass a contract during this legislative session. This in turn will effectively sentence 100,000 California public servants to severe pay cuts for at least 6 months. Given the studies showing that a simple loss of \$300 can plunge many of our citizens into homelessness, it is incumbent upon us to take action now.

Thanks to legislators like you, California continues to be a model for equity and working families, and investing in our state by investing in state workers will only bolster this legacy. Please join us in working to settle a fair contract to ensure the plights of all state workers — like those profiled here — receive the wage increase and affordable healthcare they so desperately need before the legislative session ends.

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“ I’M PROUD TO BE HELPING CALIFORNIANS. BUT THOUSANDS OF STATE EMPLOYEES CAN’T CARE FOR OUR OWN FAMILIES ON A STATE SALARY.”



My parents are undocumented, working-class immigrants, and I wanted to get a stable job to help support them and our community. So, I went to school at UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz to get a good education. However, after I got hired at the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), I discovered that the pay wasn’t fair for the field. CalHR’s pay scale, which hasn’t been adjusted for inflation, means the original salary for my position, created in 1978, would be \$75,000 annually, compared to \$57,000 today.

Every day at work, my colleagues and I focus on addressing the housing crisis. Meanwhile, despite living in a state with the world’s 4th largest economy, public programs have been gutted, and wage increases for California state workers lag behind inflation.

I want to stay with the State, but the salary is not competitive, causing brain drain and leading to chronic shortages in departments across the state. And this in turn prevents us from providing our fellow citizens with the services they expect and deserve.

State work provides underrepresented people with a path towards success and can help our communities, but not if the State doesn’t support us. People who lack social capital continue to suffer, and that gap continues to grow.

I’m proud to work for the State of California. Please help me continue doing so by making funding for state employees a priority.

MANUEL HURTADO

– DATA SPECIALIST

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (CDHCD)





“I LOVE MY JOB, AND WHEN I THINK ABOUT LEAVING IT BREAKS MY HEART, BECAUSE CALIFORNIA NEEDS MORE PEOPLE WORKING TO FIX THE HOUSING PROBLEM.”



I work in the Transactions unit in the Loan Closing Branch at the California Department of Housing and Community Development (CDHCD) as a Home Representative II. We loan money to nonprofit developers who build affordable housing. We move the incoming applications for affordable housing funds through the pipeline to the nonprofit developer so they can start construction projects. It's very complicated and requires knowledge of commercial real estate law. But we don't have enough staff to work through the underwriting, review, and analysis process to award the funds because we aren't paid enough to attract qualified candidates.

I started with the State 7 years ago at such a low salary that I had to work 3 other part-time jobs to get by. It's taken until now to get in a better place financially, but I can only afford my rent because I'm single with no children. I don't know how a single parent makes it.

Because of the staff shortages, the process to close loans, award grants, and get the planning and construction work started is delayed. This adds time, which also means added expense. So, we're building less housing at a slower rate to house our homeless population, and it's costing taxpayers more. All because the State's payrate is so low.

For a long time I had 3 staff members doing the work of 5. But instead of hiring more people, management maintained the status quo. It was hard to take your breaks and even harder to take your lunch because the work never stopped. My health deteriorated by the week, and the stress got so bad I had to inquire about taking Family Medical Leave (FMLA) and seek medical evaluation. But nothing changed.

I love my job, and when I think about leaving it breaks my heart, because California needs more people working to fix the housing problem. Instead, they're driving staff away. And I might be next.

KATHLEEN WILSON

**— TRANSACTION UNIT REP / LOAN CLOSING
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (CDHCD)**





**“WE TRANSFORM DEAF KIDS’ LIVES,
YET SEVERAL EMPLOYEES ARE LIVING
IN THEIR CARS DUE TO LOW WAGES.”**



I attended the California School for the Deaf (CSD) in Fremont as a child and came to work here as a night counselor before getting my teaching credentials. I want to be a strong advocate for all represented units at CSD, and that’s why I want to make sure that the State knows what they are doing to us.

My workplace suffers from the same issues as many others across the state, especially cost of living issues. Many of our staff members can’t afford to live in Fremont due to rising inflation, food costs, and gentrification. The State is aware of these issues. They spend millions of dollars on programs to solve them, while their own workers experience them every day.

Like many public education departments, we are also understaffed due to retention issues caused by the widening gap in pay. However, at CSD we have our own unique issues. We cannot provide our essential services to our students without being adequately supported. Systemic audism in deaf education means that our community faces a form of cultural genocide, with has societal impacts beyond our school. More and more families and relatives of CSD employees feel the pressure of these policies, which further marginalizes and limits their ability to use resources at the school.

While the State fails to act, several of our members are living in cars due to cost of living. Two of our teachers have dealt with these issues for almost a year. It’s unacceptable that we are unable to support ourselves while we work. The State needs to provide us with the resources we need to keep working and to keep our community alive.

TY KOVACS

– TEACHER

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (CSD)





“I KEEP PEOPLE SAFE ON CALIFORNIA ROADS. BUT MY SALARY IS SO LOW I STRUGGLE TO PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE.”



I work with Californians from all walks of life. Helping them is important, and it's something that gives me a lot of pride in the work I do to keep our communities safe by performing public transportation testing and certification for the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

But even though my job is gratifying, my salary is so low, it's hard for me to take care of my own family. I used to donate to the food bank, and now I'm going there to get my groceries. And eating out is out of the question, because even fast food is too expensive for us.

My daughter is very understanding — she even volunteers at homeless shelters —but when you're eating beans and rice at the end of every month, it gets discouraging. She's 14, and not being able to get new clothes can be a source of stress, especially since she's back in person at school. I just wish I could afford to get her all the things she needs.

The low pay also makes our jobs much harder because it leads to high turnover. Management simply can't fill open positions. People go through multiple rounds of interviews only to decline the position when they realize that the pay scale is so low. We're dealing with 50% vacancy rates, yet we're still asked to send people to help other offices that are even more understaffed. Management is always asking why they can't hire anybody, but with the current pay rates it's no surprise. Some of my coworkers have left to work at the federal government because they couldn't afford to pay rent on our salaries.

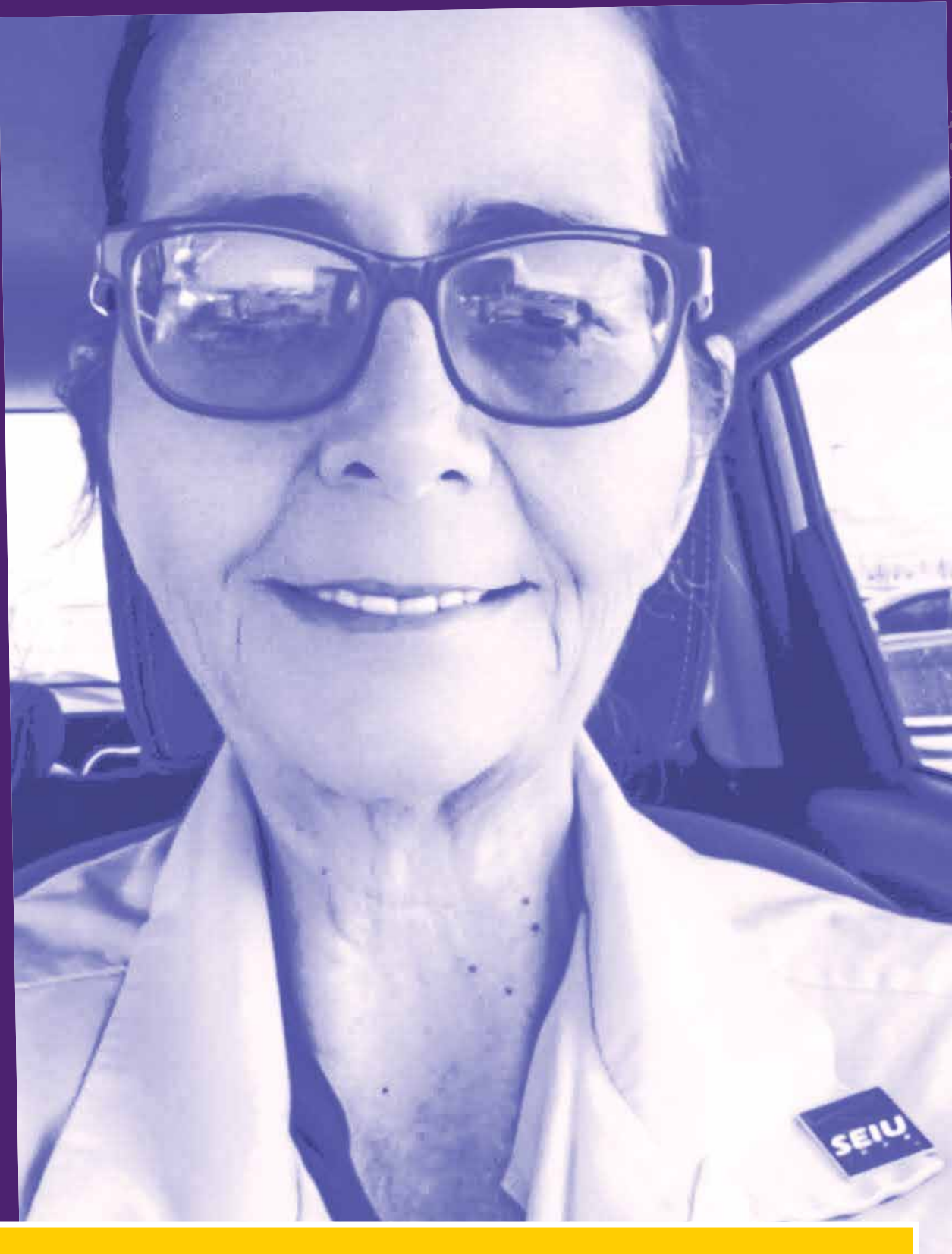
And it's not just my department. The majority of state workers are just like me. This doesn't just hurt those of us working at the DMV. It also hurts Californians who have longer waits to get the services they need.

This is inexcusable in a state as wealthy as California. There's a better way forward. All we're asking is for the State to invest in the people who keep California running to ensure we can support our own families.

TAMMY RODRIGUEZ

— MOTOR VEHICLE REPRESENTATIVE
DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES (DMV)





“I TRAIN INMATES EVERY DAY FOR WORK AFTER RELEASE, BUT LOW WAGES FORCE ME TO WORK 60+ HOURS A WEEK TO COVER THE BASICS.”



As a correctional supervising clerk at Avenal State Prison, I supervise a large inmate kitchen crew. The men on my team work hard, and I do my best to be a positive force in their lives and help them develop the skills they need to get hired in food service after they return to the community.

Working for the state has been rewarding because it's enabled me to provide for myself and take care of my sister, who's unable to work. But I just get by. So, I work overtime in order to make ends meet — everyone here does. Some of my colleagues have to share housing to survive, while others work 7 days a week because they can't afford to take a day off.

I typically work 3 overtime shifts a week, which means clocking in at 4:00 a.m. and leaving at 8:00 p.m. Many of my colleagues have it worse. They live about 50 miles away, so they have an additional 2 hours of commute time.

Not surprisingly, working like this is affecting my health. I often only get four hours of sleep a night, and I never have time to get things done that you need to do — like go to the doctor or spend time with my grandchildren or kids.

Our towns also suffer. If the state paid a livable wage, people would have more disposable income, and we'd be able to have more businesses. But nobody will open a business because they know we can't support it. So, we end up driving an hour away just to buy basics.

It leaves us feeling like the State doesn't care. We sacrificed our safety during a dangerous time — I couldn't even hold my grandson because I was exposed to Covid every day. One of my co-workers died, and my sister got it and barely survived. I'm one of only 2 people in my department that didn't get Covid, and we had to beg to get gloves and sanitizer to keep ourselves and the inmates safe. It's wasn't right to put us in that situation then, and it's not right what we're going through now. We deserve to be paid a livable wage.

SUSIE REDFEARN

**— CORRECTIONAL SUPERVISING COOK
AVENAL STATE PRISON**





“I HELP PEOPLE GET AFFORDABLE HOUSING, BUT LOW WAGES HAVE LED TO SHORT-STAFFING. THAT MEANS PEOPLE LIVE ON THE STREETS WHILE WAITING FOR OUR HELP.”



I run the Homekey Program for the California Department of Housing and Community Development (CDHCD). We fund and monitor projects for affordable housing to make sure that the housing is going to the people who need it, because once people have housing everything in their life can improve, but without it it's impossible.

All of us at CDHCD love what we do, but the wages are so low we can't keep people. These staff shortages not only slow down projects — they hurt our communities. It can take days for us to respond to grantees who are awaiting funding on their buildings, and that means people remain homeless. Believe me, I know. I'm a single mother of 3 kids, two of whom live with me in an affordable housing unit. I was unhoused and lived in my car with my first child until I was finally able to get an apartment.

When you're unhoused, you can't shower, you can't cook, and you're always sick because it's always too hot or too cold. When we were living in our car I couldn't even breast feed because I couldn't get enough to eat, so I had to buy expensive formula.

As recently as 2020 during the pandemic when the state furloughed us, I had to get a second job with Amazon making deliveries just to pay the bills. But it's hard to complain when my colleagues make even less. Some have to go to foodbanks and churches to help feed their families. Another coworker has to live with so many people, her grandmother has to sleep on her couch. We help other people get affordable housing, but we can't afford housing ourselves. How crazy is that?

I do this work because I grew up with people who were unhoused, and I want that cycle to end. Because of our work they're starting to build apartments in my neighborhood, which helps people like me have the advantages as everyone else. That's why I'm committed to my job — but it shouldn't mean that I have to struggle to feed my own family.

KRYSTAL COLES

**— HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE 2
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (CDHCD)**

