SB 876 Dies in Senate Transportation and Housing

On everyone’s minds this week was SB 876, commonly referred to as the “Right to Rest” bill. In our eyes, SB 876 would have preempted local authority to address important issues affecting public health and safety in public spaces and on private property that is held open to the public, including but not limited to, plazas, courtyards, parking lots, sidewalks, public transportation facilities, public buildings, shopping centers and parks. In such areas, homeless individuals would have been empowered to occupy such spaces, including with tents and other shelter, while reducing access to other members of the public.

The bill was heard by the Senate Transportation and Housing committee today. Voices on both side of the bill were strongly represented, with Chief Rudy Escalante, Chief Ron Lawrence, and Chief John Carli all attending the committee in opposition, alongside numerous mayors, city councilmembers and city officials.

In the end, Senators Jim Beall and Bob Wieckowski were the only two votes in favor of the bill. Senators Anthony Cannella, Ben Allen, Patricia Bates, Ted Gaines, Connie Leyva, Mike McGuire and Richard Roth all voted against the bill. Senators Cathleen Galgiani and Tony Mendoza abstained.

With two Senators voting in favor and seven against, the bill faced a crushing defeat. This outcome is in large part due to the calls chiefs in the Senate districts of committee members made over the past week. In fact, many Senators directly referenced the conversations they had with their chiefs when explaining their opposition.

Thank you to the chiefs who joined us in Sacramento and to the chiefs that called their senators and urged a “no” vote. We look forward to working with the Legislature on long-term solutions to homelessness.