

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

DAILY BRUIN

State legislature must pass AB 71 to address affordable housing crisis

By Ray Pearl and Marina Wiant
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Summer is coming, and many students are thinking about final assignments, projects, internships and making summer plans.

But for some students, summer means the end of stable housing and beginning the search for new housing options. Many will be forced into the competitive and costly rental market. Students may be surprised to find themselves couch surfing and even at risk of homelessness.

Decisions at the state and local levels have created these affordable housing barriers for students, as well as for families with children, seniors, those with disabilities and veterans. Instead of building affordable housing and creating solutions, California policymakers have allowed the housing crisis to worsen.

That could soon change, though. Lawmakers have an opportunity to take action and help ease the affordable housing crisis. Assembly Bill 71, a bill that would begin to fix California's backward housing priorities, faces a crucial vote in the California State Assembly Committee on Revenue and Taxation on Monday.

Known as the Bring California Home Act, the bill eliminates a tax break on second homes, which costs the state about \$300 million per year, that is unjustifiable at a time when students, families, veterans and elderly Californians lack a single roof over their heads. The bill redirects the savings to invest in development and preservation of affordable homes for Californians.

The committee must pass this bill. But they'll need prodding from students. All it takes is a quick email to your legislator. We urge students to visit www.BringCAhome.org to send an email to your legislator to express your support of AB 71.

Thanks to launch of Students for Students, formerly known as the Bruin Shelter, the UCLA community better understands the cruel paradox many of our students face: having the ability to attend a prestigious public university situated in the heart of Westwood but lacking the resources to put a roof over their heads and afford food.

There are an estimated 57,000 homeless college students in the United States, 10,000 of whom live in

California. Sadly, the lack of affordable housing is likely to plague students, even after they graduate and try to create a life in California.

In fact, Californians pay more for a place to live than people in any other state, which forces many to live in unsafe housing, on the streets or in their cars. When the cost of housing eats up too much of a person's income, it's more difficult to afford items necessary to their well-being like healthy food, materials for school, reliable transportation and health care. California has the highest level of poverty in the nation because of housing's impact on our cost of living.

The California Legislature must act now to fix our housing crisis. We urge policymakers in Sacramento to borrow the innovation, tenacity and commitment to community displayed by Bruins who saw an urgent need, developed a solution and took action by creating a shelter for students who didn't have a stable, affordable place to live. S4S organizers didn't wait for the problem to get worse; they cut through red tape and toppled every roadblock in their way.

A student who helps at the shelter shared with radio channel KPCC that the project was started to not only help students but also to start a discussion on homelessness and the lack of affordable housing for students. The student said that policymakers haven't tackled homelessness among college students.

Grassroots efforts like the student shelter are vital and commendable, but such approaches are Band-Aids on the housing crisis. We need sustainable, long-term, statewide policies that can be applied in every community.

As alumni, we are deeply proud of the ingenuity that comes out of this university and to bear witness to students caring for one another in one of the most basic ways: providing shelter. But it's time for California's legislators to do their part, step up and invest in affordable housing.

Pearl graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts in history in 1991. Wiant graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts in political science in 2007. Both now work for the California Housing Consortium.