



Safe Parking Policies in our Future?

Chris Rasmussen, Redwood City Police

Pastor Paul Bains, Project We Hope

Ruth Ferguson, Field Rep, Assemblyman Marc Berman

2019 Homeless Count

- All unsheltered residents 21% increase from 2017
- RV dwellers 55% of unsheltered residents
- In San Mateo County, 494 residents living in RVs, 276 increase from 2017 count

Safe Parking Panel

- Chris Rasmussen, Redwood City Police
- Pastor Paul Bains, Project We Hope
- Ruth Ferguson, Field Rep, Assemblyman Marc Berman

Chris Rasmussen

Police Department
City of Redwood City









SAFE LOTS & AB 302

Office of Assemblymember Marc Berman

Ruth Ellenberg Ferguson

ORIGIN OF AB 302

- An intern in our office brought a legislative idea to Assemblymember Berman about requiring community colleges to offer safe parking lots to their students.
- This intern was a member of the Foothill College Student Senate, and the inspiration for her bill idea came from Matthew Bodo – a Foothill student who had been living out of his car while attending classes.
 - Matthew was a Los Altos Hills resident, but was forced to leave his home after a falling out with his father.
 - He was working 14 hours a day as a valet at Tesla while attending classes at Foothill College.
 - He was sleeping in his car every night, showering on campus in the morning, attending classes, going to work, and repeating the routine all over again. (It should be noted that his shower access was due to AB 1995 by Assemblymember Williams in 2016, which requires community colleges to grant access to shower facilities to homeless students.)
 - Often, his car would be vandalized and/or he would be harassed by residents.
- After meeting with Matthew, Assemblymember Berman decided to move forward and author a bill on this idea – later becoming known as AB 302.

DETAILS OF AB 302

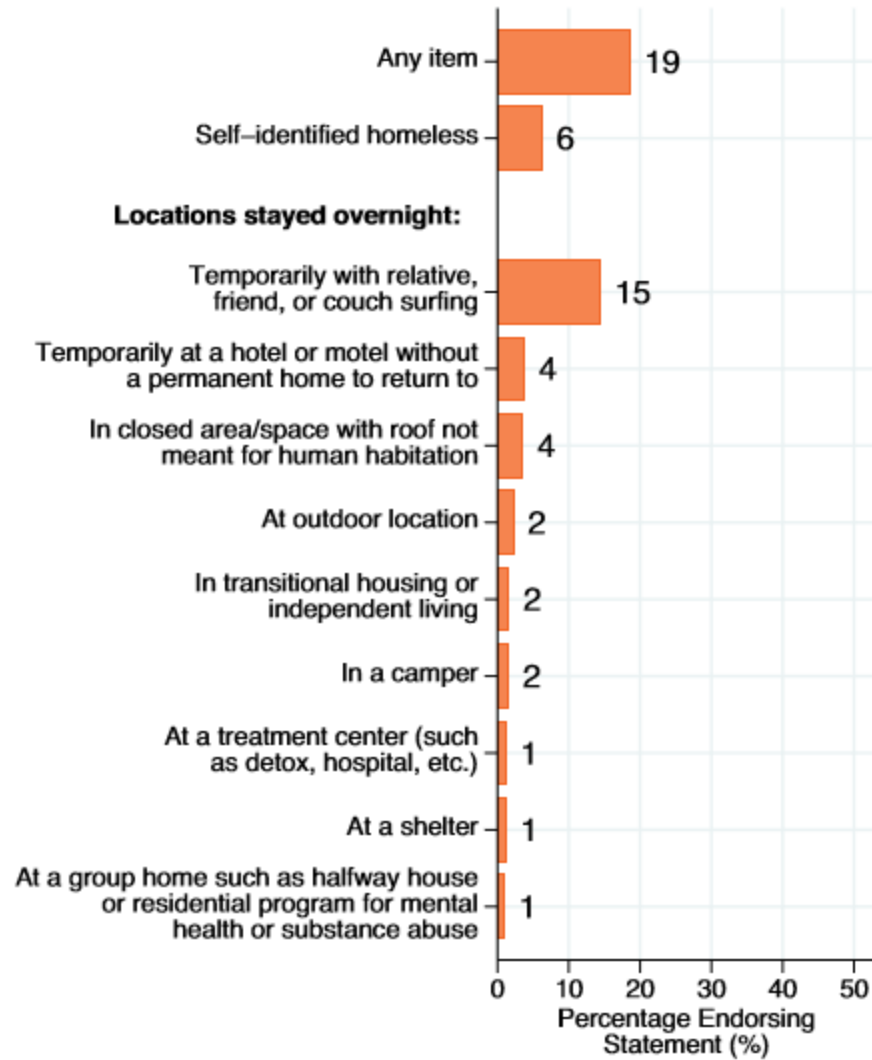
- AB 302 would have required community colleges to provide safe parking on campus for homeless students to sleep in their vehicles.
- It would have given each community college district broad flexibility to develop an implementation plan that met their local needs and circumstances.
- The bill importantly specified that it is the intent of the Legislature that homeless students who use the overnight parking facilities be connected to available state, county, community college district, and community-based housing, food, and financial assistance resources.
- When the bill was heard in the Senate Education Committee, Assemblymember Berman accepted amendments which:
 1. Added a minimum number of units that students must be enrolled in to use the overnight parking facilities.
 2. Added a sunset date of December 31, 2022, with reporting.
 3. Added an opt-out from the bill's provisions for community colleges which implement specified housing assistance activities for students experiencing homelessness.

WHAT MOTIVATED ASM. BERMAN TO AUTHOR AB 302?

A recent report released by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, which surveyed nearly 40,000 students at 57 community colleges, found that:

- 50% of respondents were food insecure in the last 30 days.
- 60% of respondents were housing secure in the previous year.
- 19% of respondents experienced homelessness in the previous year. That's almost 400,000 students statewide.

FIGURE 4. Homelessness Among California Community College Survey Respondents



Source: The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice

ANOTHER STUDENT PROFILE

- Selia Carter testified in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee in support of AB 302 and shared her experience as a homeless Foothill College student.
- Selia stated that she slept in her car as a sacrifice in order to stay in school. She was unable to sleep at home with her family because they were suffering severe substance abuse issues.
- She would sleep in her car in a junkyard in Gilroy, in Walmart parking lots, or IHOP parking lots. Wherever she slept, she was often told to leave.
- Just like Matthew, her days would typically start with a shower on campus, then lunch at a community services agency, and end with studying in the library so she could use their wifi to complete her homework. At the end of each long day, she would venture out to find the safest place she could sleep.

SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Most community colleges do not offer affordable student housing options, such as the dorms that are typically available at four-year institutions. Especially in a saturated housing market, finding affordable housing as a student can be nearly impossible.
- Many community college students come from non-traditional backgrounds – they serve a higher population of veterans, single parents, students with disabilities, first generation college students, etc.
- These factors make the challenge for community colleges even greater, especially considering the stigma attached to identifying oneself as a homeless student.

SUPPORT FOR AB 302

- Groups and individuals supporting AB 302 recognized the urgency of this issue and the need to implement short-term solutions while working toward long-term solutions.
- The Student Senate for California Community Colleges sponsored the bill.
- Our supporters list included jurisdictions and organizations from across the state, as well as local organizations such as LifeMoves, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and Move Mountain View.
- We constantly heard from community members who supported the bill, and saw the need for safe lots for people from all walks of life, especially students.

OPPOSITION TO AB 302

- The greatest opposition we had to AB 302 came from community college districts.
- Although many community colleges supported the idea of AB 302, they had concerns, some legitimate, regarding the logistics of how they would implement the parking program and the efficiency of the reimbursement process at the State.
- Community members that opposed this bill often fit into three categories:
 1. Those who thought this wasn't the "right" solution or thought it was an "inhumane" solution to the problem.
 2. Those who thought students who would be utilizing a safe parking program are criminals, drug dealers, etc.
 3. Those who simply didn't like the idea, and who thought it would change the aesthetic of the campus and surrounding area. A city councilmember from Los Altos Hills even stated during a council meeting that this bill would turn Foothill College into a Walmart parking lot.
- This type of demonization of homeless students only adds to the stigmatization and difficulty community colleges are facing in identifying homeless students.

POSITIVE IMPACTS OF AB 302

- It is undeniable that this bill has had an immensely positive impact, even though Asm. Berman decided to pull this bill after it was significantly amended.
 - Due to the early amendment that allowed community colleges to opt-out of the requirements of AB 302, we saw many community colleges bolster their communication of the services they provide to homeless students.
 - Students rallied around this bill. Several students spoke about the major impact this bill would have on their lives, and how important it is to offer a safe place for students to sleep. Although this doesn't destigmatize the issue, and we will never know the measureable impact this had on homeless students, it absolutely was a positive step in the right direction.
 - It required communities to start talking about a real issue that many people in their communities aren't facing. Opening up this subject for discussion hopefully means that residents have had the opportunity to think more critically about this real crisis in our state.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Assemblymember Berman is currently in the process of considering next steps.
- Assemblymember Berman will not reintroduce AB 302 in its current form, as it will face the same opposition as before. However, he is considering viable alternatives to AB 302.
- As Assemblymember Berman noted many times during this process, AB 302 would not have been a *solution* to the homelessness crisis. Building more housing is the solution.
- Our office is committed to seeking out ideas for short-term stopgaps and long-term solutions to the homelessness crisis.
- If you have a bill idea, let's chat.