



## SB 1167 (Hueso) ENFORCEMENT OF PEST INFESTATIONS

### **Pest Infestations Harm Health**

Housing conditions have a significant impact on health. Infestations of insects and rodents are particularly harmful to residents. Cockroach and rodent allergens in homes have been linked to an increase in the prevalence and severity of asthma symptoms, with cockroach allergens estimated to be the primary contributor to childhood asthma in inner-city homes nationwide.<sup>i</sup> The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies 35 diseases spread by rodents through bites, contact with feces, urine, or saliva, or through intermediary insects like fleas.<sup>ii</sup> Bed bugs are identified as having significant physical and mental health impacts, including itching, hives/welts, infections, anxiety, and insomnia.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Housing Conditions and Pest Infestations**

Pest infestations are related to underlying housing conditions that provide entry, food, water, and harborage that allow pests to thrive, such as cracks and holes in walls and flooring and leaky plumbing. Exterminating the pest alone has shown to be an ineffective long-term solution to pest infestations because the underlying conditions supporting the pest population remains. Alternatively, pest management solutions that both eliminate the pest and remediate the conditions that support pest populations has shown to be an effective long-term solution to pest problems.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Current Law Related to Pest Infestations**

Substandard housing conditions are defined as conditions that threaten the “life, limb, health, property, or welfare of the public or the occupants.” Existing law identifies infestations of insects, vermin, or rodents, as well as many of the underlying conditions that contribute to infestations, as a substandard housing conditions. Those cited for a pest infestation, however, are only required to exterminate the pest.<sup>v</sup>

### **The Problem**

Because the extermination of pests alone is not an effective long-term solution to an infestation, property owners cited for a pest infestation can exterminate the pest, have their citation cleared, only to have the pests reemerge weeks or months later. As a result, occupants face repeated exposure to the health risks of the pests as well as any risks related to the exposure of the pesticides used to exterminate the pests.

This is a particular concern for tenants, especially those living in the low-income communities where substandard housing conditions are most common. This disproportionate exposure to unhealthy housing conditions, such as pest infestations, plays a role in the health

disparities found in such communities, including higher asthma rates and higher rates of emergency room visits and hospitalizations due to asthma.

### **The Solution**

SB 1167 would ensure that those cited for a pest infestation also address any substandard housing conditions that contribute to the infestation by simply aligning existing codes related to pest infestations and habitability. Addressing conditions that contribute to an infestation will result in more effective long-term elimination of pest infestations, healthier living conditions for residents, and healthier communities.

### **Support**

California Association of Code Enforcement Officers (Sponsor)  
Physicians for Social Responsibility – Los Angeles (Sponsor)  
Regional Asthma Management and Prevention (Sponsor)  
Alameda County Healthy Homes Department  
Asthma Coalition of Los Angeles County  
Breathe California  
California Pan Ethnic Health Network  
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation  
Center for Environmental Health

Community Action to Fight Asthma  
Esperanza Community Housing Corp.  
Healthy Homes Collaborative  
Inquilinos Unidos  
Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma  
Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition  
Natural Resource Defense Council  
Pacoima Beautiful  
Rural Communities Resource Center  
Sierra Club of California  
Sonoma County Asthma Coalition  
United for Change in Tooleville  
Western Center on Law and Poverty

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<sup>i</sup> Eggleston, P. A., A. Butz, C. Rand, J. Curtin-Brosnan, S. Kanchanaraksa, L. Swartz, P. Breysse, et al. “Home environmental intervention in inner-city asthma: a randomized controlled clinical trial.” *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology* 95 (6): 518–524 (2005).

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<sup>ii</sup> US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/rodents/> (Accessed March 1, 2013).

<sup>iii</sup> Joint statement on bed bug control in the United States, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. [http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Publications/Bed\\_Bugs\\_CDC-EPA\\_Statement.htm#1](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Publications/Bed_Bugs_CDC-EPA_Statement.htm#1) (accessed 3/1/13).

<sup>iv</sup> Brenner, B., et al. “Integrated Pest Management in an Urban Community: A Successful Partnership for Prevention.” *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 111(13): 1649-1653 (2003).

Miller, D. M., and F. Meek. “Cost and efficacy comparison of integrated pest management strategies with monthly spray insecticide applications for German cockroach control in public housing”, *J. Econ. Entomol.* 97: 559-569 (2004).

<sup>v</sup> Health and Safety Code Section 17920.3 and Section 116125 define substandard housing conditions <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=hsc&group=17001-18000&file=17920-17928> and <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=hsc&group=116001-117000&file=116125-116170>