

On Lok Endorses San Francisco Prop. A

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San Francisco, a city with one of the most expensive rental and homeownership markets in the U.S., continues to experience an ever-widening affordability gap. This has led to an affordable housing supply that has not – and does not – keep pace with demand. Among those most significantly impacted are seniors. As the founder of PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly), and an organization that has developed housing and partnered with housing providers, we believe it is crucial to ensure that seniors have access to affordable and safe housing so they may age in place for as long as possible.

Simply put, the unmet need for affordable senior housing is clear. The number of homeless seniors is rising and seniors are disproportionately impacted by no-fault evictions. A full 24 percent of San Franciscans living under the poverty line are 60+ years old. While the City's real median income rises faster than almost every other in the nation, most seniors can only rely upon fixed incomes that fall behind increasing market rents and the local cost of living.

U.S. Census data reveals that almost all of San Francisco's recently developed "affordable" senior housing has been *unaffordable* for a majority of seniors who need it. Because San Francisco's housing policies disregard the actual economic conditions of the City's seniors, the *minimum* income required for an affordable senior studio is higher than the income of a majority of seniors who live alone.

Furthermore, the inability to access newly constructed senior housing has a particularly harsh impact on the more than one-third of seniors who are also disabled. While we strongly support programs and policies that prevent displacement and keep seniors in place, many mobility-impaired seniors have an urgent need to relocate into housing with fully accessible facilities. However, current unaffordable rent standards for senior housing stand in the way.

Fortunately, a step in the right direction will be on our ballots November 5. As the City's largest and most significant housing measure ever introduced, Proposition A will allow San Francisco to issue \$600 million in bonds earmarked for affordable housing – \$150 million of which will go specifically toward housing for seniors.

It is imperative that we do the right thing for the City's most vulnerable who are being left behind not only by San Francisco's growing prosperity, but also by its policies that exclude too many seniors who need housing. The editorial board for the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) agrees that Proposition A represents desperately needed funding for homes. Please join us at the polls on November 5 in supporting Proposition A and encourage your friends and family in San Francisco to do the same. Together, we can make a difference.

Grace Li is the CEO of On Lok, a San Francisco nonprofit organization that empowers older adults to age at home with dignity and independence.