

## **Patrick Hickey Statement on Grand Jury Report on Housing-9-28-2021**

Dear Chair Gjerde, Board members, CEO Angelo, my name is Patrick Hickey, I am speaking on behalf of the Mendocino County Chapter of SEIU 1021.

SEIU Local 1021 represents over 1,000 public employees in Mendocino County--workers at the County, the Superior Court, Mendocino College and the City of Ft. Bragg. A complaint and concern brought up at many chapter union meetings has been the lack of affordable housing in the County. As we heard more and more stories of employers struggling to find qualified candidates, because of the lack of housing, we established a working group to investigate the issue and determine what we could do to help address this problem.

Mendocino County, like much of the state of California, is experiencing a housing availability and affordability crisis. The lack of housing is driving up house prices and rents. It is impacting employers who are unable to recruit workers because of the historically low vacancy rates and slow pace of new construction. This is making it harder for young people who have grown up here to find a place of their own. The reasons for the housing crunch are varied and complex--a construction worker shortage, burdensome and expensive permitting and development fees, housing being converted to short term vacation rentals, water and sewer hookup limitations, housing stock loss due to wildfires. Limited sites available for development because of zoning, fire danger, coastal restrictions etc.

Mendocino County's population is relatively stable and growth is projected to be modest over the next five years, so meeting the County's housing needs should be an achievable goal. The shortage is not just in the affordable housing segment, but with middle-income housing as well.

Municipalities and the County government have taken steps to address the housing shortage with some success, but more action is needed.

There are many local organizations that have been working on this issue. They have helped raise awareness about the problem and have made progress in crafting solutions to address it.

The Housing Action Team and the Anderson Valley Utility Service District submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations that is included in Appendix B of the County's Housing Element that we cannot improve upon. It provides a road map to

addressing the multifaceted challenges that have led to our current housing shortage and the steps we need to take to emerge from it. We urge you to review and implement their recommendations.

Thank you.