



**California Rural
Legal Assistance
Foundation**



HEALTHY AND HEAT RESILIENT HOMES

SUMMARY

This bill would address an increase in heat-related illness and deaths in California, which disproportionately impacts people of color and low-income households, by requiring the ability to maintain a maximum temperature in rental housing. While California's requirements for habitable housing include requirements for heating regardless of where the dwelling is located, the law does not contain a corresponding requirement with respect to extreme heat.

BACKGROUND

Heat-related deaths have increased in California in the last decade. Reports find that vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, people with preexisting conditions, and low-income communities of color are disproportionately impacted across the State. According to a recent report in the LA Times, "the unequal distribution of cooling. . . is a big reason the health impacts of worsening heat waves fall disproportionately on the poor and communities of color while those with money and privilege remain relatively shielded from the problem..."

Exposure to excess heat leads to a range of adverse health impacts, can diminish the efficacy of medications that require cold storage such as insulin, amplifies the risks borne by those with preexisting health conditions, and has resulted in a troubling

increase in heat-related illness and death. Vulnerable populations and low-income renters of color throughout the state often live in older homes that are not well-equipped for average summer temperatures, much less extreme heat, with indoor temperatures often exceeding those outdoors due to a lack of insulation, a lack of shade, and/or the absence of a cooling system, which exacerbates heat-related health risks.

THIS BILL

AB 2597 is a common-sense measure to ensure every Californian lives in a safe and resilient home that provides refuge from extreme heat. As the state explores potential resources to meet our climate goals, we must not allow renters to suffer from extreme heat where they are arguably most vulnerable - their homes. Existing and proposed funding programs can address direct installation of building infrastructure and low carbon technologies, such as heat pumps. AB 2597 would modernize the state's habitability code by requiring that rental units can maintain a safe indoor temperature.

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