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Remembering honorable Mr. Dewan Chand Ahir Sahib

(February 28, 1928 - July 12, 2012)

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Honorable Mr. Dewan Chand Ahir (lovingly called D.C. Ahir) dedicated his entire life for the spread of the mission of Bharat Ratan Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar for the betterment of the community. He was one the few scholars whose views on Buddhism and the teachings of Babasaheb are valued deeply among the intellectual circles



across the world. He wrote many books on the history of Buddhism in South Asia and the philosophy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He also wrote on the rise of Ad Dharm and Ambedkarite movement in Punjab (Dr. Ambedkar and Punjab, Delhi: B.R. Publications 1991). His seminal work on The Pioneers of Buddhist Revival in India published by Sri Satguru Publications, 1989 is one of the many widely read of his books. He also used to write poetry for Ujala paper edited by Sh. K.C. Sulekh, a well-known name in Ambedkarite circles. We fondly remember him and pay floral tribute to him on his Prinirvana Day. We take pride in reproducing herewith one chapter from his seminal writings for the benefit of our esteemed readers!

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The Ad Dharm Movement and Dr. Ambedkar

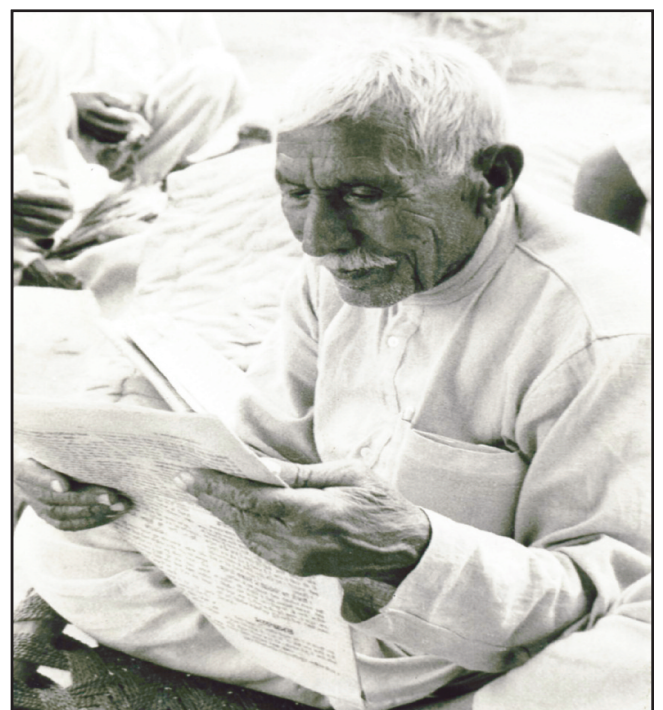
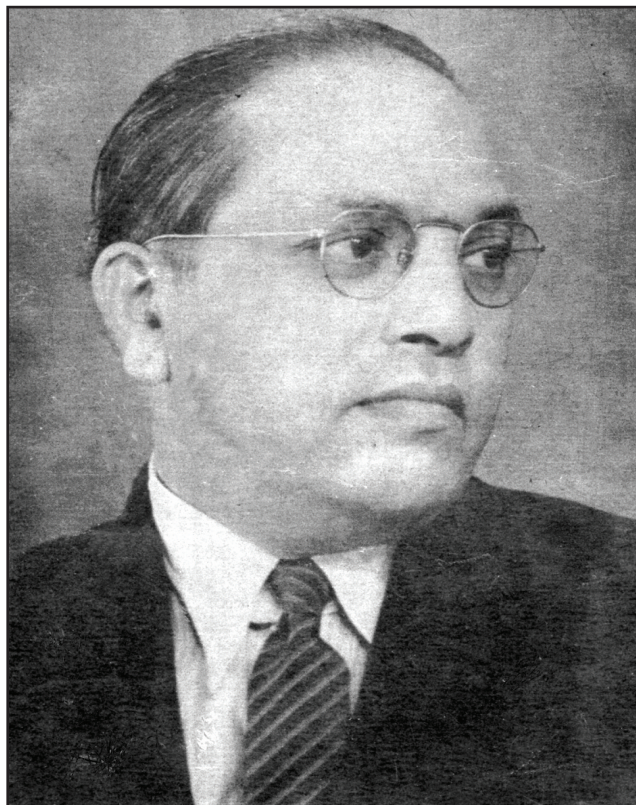
When in 1915 Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was giving final touches to his Ph.D. thesis at Columbia University in New York, a Punjabi youth, who had gone to America a few years earlier, was involved in a dangerous mission of smuggling guns from California to the Punjab for inciting mutiny in India. This Punjabi youth later became famous as Babu Mangu Ram, the founder of the Ad Dharm Movement. Mangu Ram was born in a small village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur, Punjab on 14 January, 1886 in an untouchable family; his father was a leather merchant. As by then the doors of education had been opened to all by the British rulers, Mangu Ram was sent to the school in the nearby village, Mahilpur, but the treatment meted out to him by the Hindu teacher was far from human. Like Bhim Rao in Satara, Mangu Ram too was made to sit

tened back, never to go again to the school. And that was the end of his education.

With his education coming to an abrupt end, Mangu Ram became unemployed, and bit frustrated too. In 1909, he, along with some other young men from the village, went to California, U.S.A. in order to earn some money by working

D. C. Ahir

in the Peach Orchards of Fresno and elsewhere in the San Joaquin valley of central California. Instead of earning money, he, however, became involved in the activities of the Ghadar Party, an international network of militant Punjabi nationalists led by Lala Hardayal. By his sheer devotion and sincerity to the cause of India's freedom, he came to be regarded as the most dependable and reliable member of the organization. In 1915, Mangu Ram volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites accompanying a



Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia
January 14, 1886 – April 22, 1980
Founder of the Ad Dharm Movement Punjab

outside the classroom. Not only that, even the teacher would not teach him directly; he was invariably given lesson through a Muslim student. Somehow, Mangu Ram passed his middle examination and joined high school at Bajwara, a nearby town. Here too. He was subjected to the same humiliation, and was made to sit outside the classroom. One day, it rained so heavily that in spite of taking shelter under a tree, Mangu Ram was completely drenched. And when the snow-balls, accompanied by high velocity winds, fell like missiles on him, he was unable to bear it any longer. So, he ran to take shelter inside the classroom. As soon as he had entered the room, the teacher saw him, and instead of showing any sympathy, he started beating him with a stick for having come inside. Weeping and crying, Mangu Ram went out, and somehow reached his home.

Unmindful of the insult and beating, Mangu Ram again went to the school next day. As soon as he reached there, he was surprised to see the teacher in the process of purifying the classroom by sprinkling water on the wooden table, chair and the tats on which the students used to sit. On seeing him, Brahmin teacher cried out, "Oh Chandal, you have come again".

Fearing another beating, Mangu Ram has-

shipload of guns and propaganda material headed for India. This ship was unfortunately intercepted by the British as Batavia, and was sealed. It remained sealed for nearly a year, with the five Ghadarites as prisoners inside. In the meanwhile, they were prosecuted in absentia, and sentenced to death for taking out the weapons illegally on the ship. On hearing the capital punishment, some patriot Indians in Germany decided to help the imprisoned Ghadarites.

Somehow, they managed to smuggle the prisoners out from the sealed ship, and sent them in different directions. Mangu Ram was put in a ship going to Manila. By mistake, however, the ship reached Singapore.

Unfortunately for Mangu Ram, here he was recognized by some traitor Indians who had earlier worked for the Ghadar Party. They informed the Police. By now, for running away from Batavia, death warrants had been issued by the British Government to be executed wherever any one of them was found. Accordingly, the Singapore Police began preparing for his execution. Then a miracle happened. Just half an hour before his execution, a gentleman named Barde, whom Mangu Ram had never seen or met, came, caught

(Contd. on next page)

The Ad Dharm Movement and Dr. Ambedkar

(Continue from page 1)

him by the arm, took him out of the Thana, and putting him on the same ship in which Mangu Ram had come, he asked the Captain of the ship to sail for Manila. By the time the Police swung into action, the ship had crossed the Singapore Port Limits. Having failed to intercept the ship, the police caught hold of some drunkard; executed him to cover up their lapse, and announced that Mangu Ram had been executed. This news was later published in the Indian Newspapers.

For the next 7-8 years, Mangu Ram hid in the Philippines, and during this period he had no contact with his family as no letters could be written for fear of being intercepted. Taking him, therefore, as dead, his wife married Mangu Ram's elder brother, who was a widower.

The validity of the death warrant issued by the British Government lapsed in 1924. Then Mangu Ram thought of returning to India. Accordingly, he came back to Punjab in 1925. Soon thereafter, Mangoo Ram became involved in another kind of freedom struggle, the liberation of the untouchables, the people among whom he was born, and the people who were meekly suffering the atrocities of the Hindus. Babu Mangu Ram's association with the Ghadar Party had broadened his outlook, and sharpened his skills as an organizer. Soon he found a band of like-minded young men involved in the social

work, and began organizing them in order to liberate the downtrodden from the clutches of the Hindu social slavery.

Encouraged by the response to his ideas, Babu Mangu Ram convened a Conference at his village Mughowal in district Hoshiarpur on 11-12 June, 1926. Addressing the largely attended Conference, Babu Mangu Ram proclaimed that the Untouchables constituted a separate Qaum, a religious community like the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, and those they were the original inhabitants of this country. Hence, the movement was named as Ad Dharm; and its leaders devised distinctive costume, bright red turbans and shashes; coined a new sacred mantra or symbol, "So-hang" and exhorted the people to call themselves as Ad Dharmis.

The primary object of the Ad Dharm was to give the untouchables an alternative religion. Its another object was to reform the society from within. As social movement, the Ad Dharm exhorted the people to abstain from immoral practices; to lead a life of purity and piety; to discard the use of alcohol, drugs, give education to boys and girls, and to treat all men and women equal in the society. On the whole, the movement was aimed at giving the untouchables a sense of pride and dignity as members of the Ad Dharm.

The headquarters of Ad Dharm Mandal were established in Jalandhar city from where the move-

ment was organized in a systematic manner, and the devoted missionaries spread the message far and wide in the Punjab, and even beyond. Since the Mandal had accepted Sahib Shri Guru Ravidass Ji as its spiritual leader, the movement became primarily popular amongst the Chamars, and they readily adopted the nomenclature of Ad Dharmi.

At the time, Babu Mangu Ram was organizing the untouchables of the Punjab under the banner of Ad Dharm; Dr. Ambedkar was fighting a similar battle in another part of the country. Though they were thousands of miles apart, yet their ideas and methods of struggle were almost identical. Both believed that the present day Scheduled Castes are not Hindus, and that their salvation lies only in being independent of the Hindu religion.

Both believed in self-help and advocated peaceful means to achieve their goal. Both laid the greatest emphasis on 'education'. Babasaheb considered "education" the key to all progress, and Mangu Ram says that only "education can lead us to Sachkhand (the realm of truth)." Again, Babasaheb exhorted the people to follow the Three Commandments of 'Education, Agitation and Organization' to gain power. According to Mangu Ram, the poor have three kinds of power: "Qaumiat (collective solidarity), Mazhab (spirituality) and Majlis (organization)".

Within a year of its founding,

the Ad Dharm movement created quite a stir in the Punjab by constant rallies and conferences, it forced the Government of the day to take notice of the problems of the untouchables. One of the reasons of the poverty and exploitation of the untouchables was the pernicious system of beggar, the system under which they were forced to live at the beck and call of others and were obliged to do a great deal of work without any remuneration whatsoever.

The Ad Dharm Mandal agitated against the system of beggar, and demanded its abolition. The Mandal also agitated for repealing the Punjab Land Alienation Act which prohibited the untouchables from buying even a small piece of land. The Ad Dharm movement reached its peak at the time of 1931 Census. As a result of their sustained propaganda, more than half a million untouchables declared themselves as Ad Dharmis.

This showed the organizational skill of its leaders. "The massive support", as says Mark Juergensmeyer, "created political capital, and Mangu Ram used that capital in political ways. Ad Dharmi candidates stood for public offices and an alliance was created with the Unionist Party. In both instances, scheduled caste leaders supported by the Ad Dharm organization achieved public positions".

by D. C. Ahir

Courtesy: Dr. Ambedkar and Punjab



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Historicity of Chamar Women's Contribution in the Ambedkaraite Movement: Part - 3

Venubai Shivtarkar

As India is a country with a patriarchal social system, it is a lot of women to silently cooperate with the work done by men. Therefore, in the movements that took place in India; the men working in it are supported by their housewife's mother, sister, and daughter. As education began, women began to think outside the workplace. Women began to participate in various sectors like education, social reform, and many other fields; but before that, if a man worked in the movement, his wife, mother, and daughter would enter the movement through that man in Ambedkaraite Movement. It can be seen that the participation of women in the movement of Babasaheb Ambedkar's colleague Sitaram Shivtarkar's house is also similar.

Sitaram Shivtarkar is well-known as Shivtarkar Guruji or Shivtarkar Master (Teacher) as he played a vital role in the early stage of the Ambedkaraite movement. He had two wives. Earlier it was a practice to have two wives. Sitaram Shivtarkar Guruji's first marriage was to Sitabai Sambhaji Devrukhkar in 1913. The marriage took place at Barhanpur. Before marriage, her name was Vithabai. After marriage, changed her name to Sitabai as per the social tradition. In 1916, she gave birth to a son, Sahadev. In 1920, she gave birth to a son, Shankar. Then, three years after Shankar, she gave birth to two daughters. Those daughters died at birth. Sitabai died when the second daughter was born. Then the son Shankar was four years old. We have Shankar's date of birth, which means she must have died in 1924. The name of Shivtarkar's wife does not appear in documents related to the movement, but there are many references to his second wife 'Venubai'.

Sitaram Shivtarkar Guruji's second marriage was to Venubai Devlekar on June 11, 1916. Their Gandharva marriage took place at Kurla. In 1917, she gave birth to a daughter named Anusaya. This girl is later seen active in the Ambedkaraite movement. It is seen that Shivtarkar Guruji had strong support from the women of his family. Because of the support of Venubai and Anusaya Shivtarkar Guruji

played important roles in the Ambedkaraite movement.

On October 25, 1931, a meeting of untouchable women was held in the grand courtyard of the Improvement Trust Chaul. Mrs. Venubai Shivtarkar participated in this meeting. In this meeting, the 'Bahiskrit Samaj Mahila Mandal' was formed. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's role in the Round Table Conference was supported. Along with this, the Samaj Samata Sangh used to organize a family co-meal program. Sitaram Shiv-

According to Khairmode's description, Mrs. Shivtarkar was a good cook. Also, it can be seen that her action was done with the intention of people from different castes coming home to eat and to break the constraints of caste rules. This means that Venubai Shivtarkar can be seen actively contributing to the struggle for social change. Despite facing the opposition of their fellow castes along with Sitaram Shivtarkar Guruji. This experiment of family meals was started to eliminate the differences between

vey the special information. The pledge of jewelry has been cancelled. Answering as soon as the check arrives means that the worry of missing it will be removed. To Shivtarkar Master, Check no. M54084 Thomas Cook Cross order Date 21.03.34 Industrial & Provincial Assurance & Co. Ltd. (it is from the letter of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1934)

According to Shivtarkar's son, first the wife mortgaged the jewelry. Later it is seen that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar paid the money by check and cancelled the system of pawning the jewellery. Even if Sitaram Shivtarkar Guruji does all these things, Stridhan (jewelry, money, and gifts that are received to women from her parents) belongs to that woman only. Venubai Shivtarkar also donates Gold Stridhan to the movement, which is a very important contribution.

Venubai suffered from a very serious disease like cancer in her old age. In 1952, she was ill for a whole year. About this Sahadev Sitaram Shivtarkar says in his autobiography, 'December 6, 1952 when I was on duty at Bhijpuri Power Station at 2 midnight on I was told

over the phone from the Dharavi receiving station that, my mother succumbed to cancer. Of the year 1951 from the very beginning, this disease kept gnawing at my mother's body as my father was kept awake by the doctor beforehand. After his success in the January 1952 elections, my father hurriedly a group photo of our Shivtarkar family at Khapade in Boribandar. Went to the art studio, and took it off. The mother was suffering from internal pain'.

tarkar was an untouchable member of Samaj Samata Sangh. So a co-meal family dinner was organized at his home. Accordingly, On November 3, 1928, a family dinner was held at Sitaram Shivtarkar Guruji's house. About this collective meal Written by Khairmode. He says, on the date 3.11.28 he had lunch at Shivtarkar's house. Mrs. Shivtarkar also cooked well; but the members were in no mood to give her that kind of appreciation because, at the time, the dinner was held on the first floor of the Noble House. At the same time, a Chamar Panchayat meeting was going on the ground floor regarding the Caste exclusion of the Shivtarkar family by the RohidasChambharSamaj. The faces of Shivtarkar himself and his wife were fallen. We all felt great sympathy for the ambivalence. This statement of Khairmode is very important. Because when this was happening, among the members Changdev Khairmode also present at the dinner was given. Evidence that he was an eyewitness to the incident is found in the November 16, 1928 issue of Samata Pakshik. In this issue, there was news of a family dinner. Also a list of names of members of various castes who were present. Khairmode's name is also there.

castes. It is seen that Venubai Shivtarkar also contributed to this effort regardless of the opposition of the society.

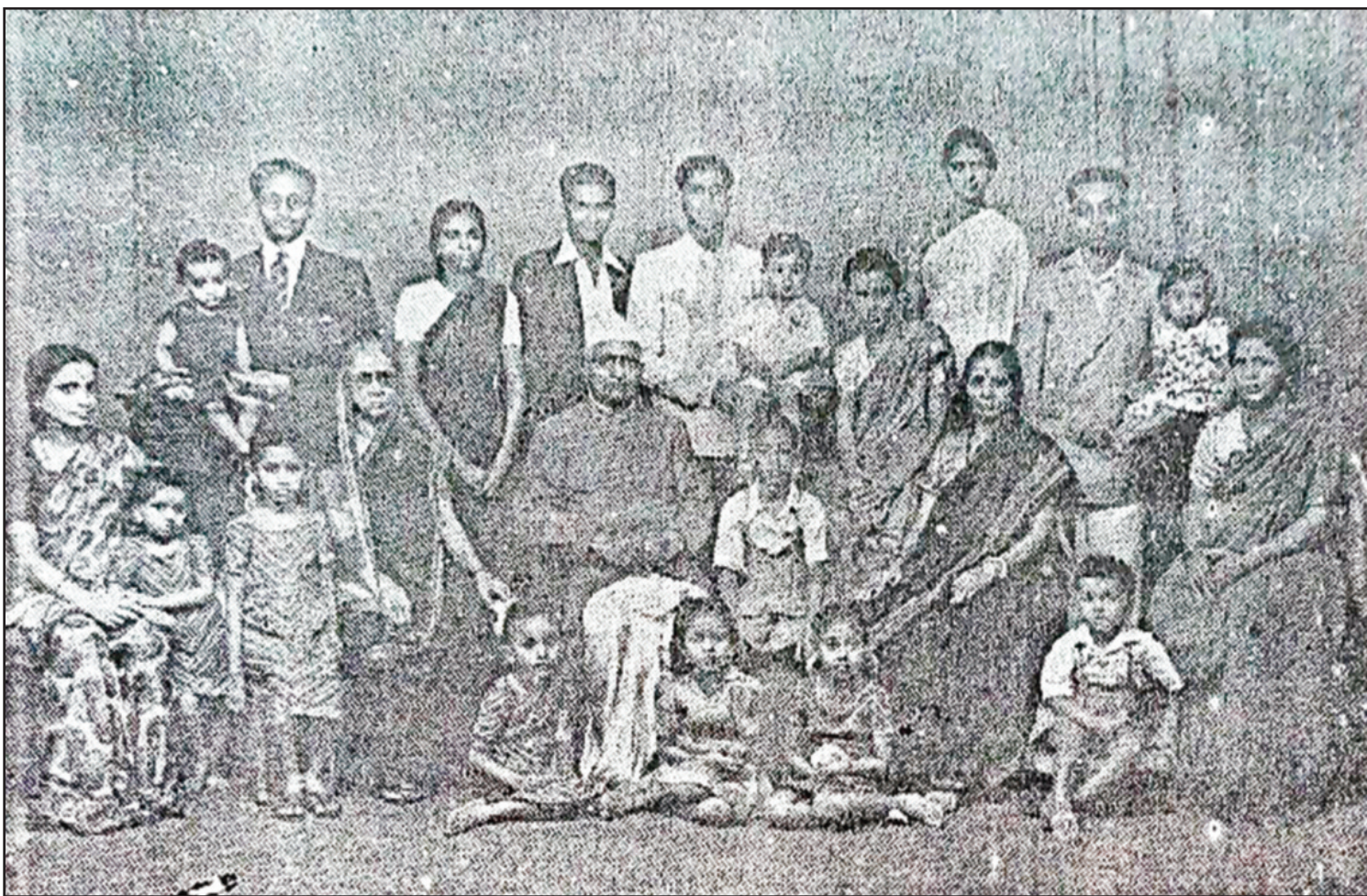
Sitaram Shivtarkar's contribution to the Ambedkaraite movement till the formation of the Independent Labour Party is very important. His role is very important in the development of the movement at every stage in the early times. When Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was in abroad, Shivtarkar also did the very difficult task of taking charge of the movement. Shivtarkar Guruji devoted himself to all this work. Shivtarkar tended to work by offering all his heart and money for it. Shivtarkar Guruji's son has written the biography of Sitaram Shivtarkar. In this biography, Shivtarkar Guruji is said to have pledged his wife's jewelry for the cause of the movement. In 1934 Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar wrote a letter to Shivtarkar Guruji.

In that letter, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar says that, on the date 15 had written to the insurance company, But there is no reply from them yet, I don't know what is the matter, however, to be careful, I am sending a check of twelve hundred and forty as per the account you have written, to go and pay it immediately and to con-

over the phone from the Dharavi receiving station that, my mother succumbed to cancer. Of the year 1951 from the very beginning, this disease kept gnawing at my mother's body as my father was kept awake by the doctor beforehand. After his success in the January 1952 elections, my father hurriedly a group photo of our Shivtarkar family at Khapade in Boribandar. Went to the art studio, and took it off. The mother was suffering from internal pain'.

We were all convinced after seeing the group photo. I am from Bhivpuri camp 7:30 hrs. By trolley by Karjat local from Bhivpuri railway station arrived at Kaivalyadham at Shivaji Park at 11:30 am. After landing at Dadar. More than a thousand people had gathered in the cemetery for paying homage. In the cemetery, almost giving speeches on the character traits and qualities of my mother At 2.30 pm, we returned home.

From this it will be noticed that the silent contribution of Venubai to the movement with her husband. Venubai's end was very sad. Although we have very less written references of Venubai's contribution it is true in Indian society women became a part of her husband's work eventually.



Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

Legislative Update: Bills on the Move

This week, AB 1308 passed unanimously out of the Senate Local Government Committee with a 7-0 vote. The bill creates a statutory requirement for local building departments to conduct

AB 1246: supports the continued growth of craft distilleries by extending their authorization to sell and ship products online and by increasing the amount they may sell directly to customers at their tasting rooms.

AB 1341: protects against the



final inspections within a set timeframe for small-scale residential projects. California faces a severe and worsening housing crisis, fueled by a critical shortage of homes for people at every income level. One barrier to solving this crisis is the persistent delay in local government inspections, which stalls the housing production pipeline. This bill aims to provide developers with greater predictability and timeliness during residential construction inspections and marks a critical step in ensuring that local governments remain focused on housing delivery.

Many of my other bills have also successfully advanced through the policy committees and are now headed to the Senate Appropriations Committee, where they will be reviewed for their fiscal impact. The following key measures are waiting to be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee:

AB 922: ensures the University of California maintains access to federal criminal conviction history results for additional prospective employees.

AB 978: promotes the use of sustainable and cost-saving recycled materials, such as recycled asphalt pavement, in our local road projects.

AB 1011: Ryla's Law fights to hold offenders of child abuse accountable for their egregious crimes.

AB 1142: updates outdated entry fee thresholds for our local amateur horse shows so they have the flexibility required to continue serving our communities.

unlicensed practice of building disciplines, protecting consumers and promoting fairness among each profession.

Two of my bills are still moving through the Senate. AB 1375 requires courts to provide necessary protections for victims of human trafficking in child custody disputes, and is set to be heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee this week. AB 962 clarifies the Phone-Free Schools Act so as not to conflict with Comprehensive School Safety Plans and is now eligible to be heard on the Senate Floor.

I am also pleased to share that two more of my bills passed both houses and were sent to the Governor's desk to be signed. AB 784, which was signed this week, clarifies existing law to allow for more consistent practices, thorough specialized instruction, and adequate resources for students with hearing impairments. Also sitting on the Governor's desk is AB 1478, which helps promote consumer affordability and retailer flexibility while complying with mattress recycling law.

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for LIHA Adult Day Care

Last week, my team had the pleasure of attending the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for LIHA Adult Day Health Care Center in Rancho Cordova. This brand new facility provides a variety of services from therapy to nursing assistance for seniors and adults, while ensuring each individual receives



tailored support for their needs. The staff at LIHA are committed to providing compassionate care and creating a warm and engaging environment for all of their patients. We were so happy to be a part of this ceremony and thrilled to welcome this great new addition to our community. We wish LIHA success in this new chapter and thank them for their dedication to adult health!

Celebrating the Grand Opening for Light Phase Engineering

My staff enjoyed attending the ribbon cutting and grand opening for



Light Phase Engineering & Advocacy in Gold River. Light Phase provides expertise in a number of areas, including advocacy for permitting for businesses. Additionally, Light Phase provides services for planning, traffic control, and network planning. We would like to extend our congratulations and excitement to this new business in our district! Visit them online to learn more.

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for MM Beauty



Last week, my staff had the pleasure of attending the ribbon cutting for MM Beauty's new location in Rancho Cordova in partnership with the Rancho Cordova



Assemblyman Hoover



Chamber of Commerce. The new facility, located inside Frequency Coworking & Events, is a space to help nurture your mind, body, and soul. From facials and skincare to airbrush spray tanning, MM Beauty is dedicated to creating a custom treatment regimen that works for you. We are beyond grateful to be a part of this special day, and are eager to see the future of MM Beauty in Rancho Cordova.

Orangevale History Museum Celebrates 2nd Anniversary

On Saturday, July 12, the Orangevale History Museum hosted its 2nd Anniversary Celebration. Our team had the privilege of attending and joining the community in honoring this meaningful milestone. The celebration featured food, music, fun activities, and the unveiling of the museum's newest exhibit highlighting the Orangevale Woman's Club, honoring their impact on local history and community life. If you haven't been, we encourage you to check out the museum! It is open to the public with free admission. Plan your visit online.



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