

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN AND
HOLLY MITCHELL

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Support of Assembly Bill 2220 (Muratsuchi) Homeless Court Pilot Program

The homelessness crisis in California is an exceptionally complex issue that requires urgent attention and a variety of resources to meet the diverse needs of unhoused individuals. We need a model that addresses the inherent barriers that housing unhoused individuals face while providing a community-based framework to manage local challenges. Homeless Court is a unique program aimed at a segment of the population that typically has no means for making reparations to the criminal justice system for misdemeanor criminal conduct. Misdemeanor citations are often overlooked, which compounds the problem by generating warrants and additional fines. Homeless Court provides alternative solutions by offering individuals an opportunity to dismiss outstanding criminal cases and to support them in becoming “housing ready.”

The Homeless Court model already exists on a small scale in Los Angeles County (County). The City of Redondo Beach runs a Homeless Court program that diverts unhoused individuals from jail and into housing for certain qualifying misdemeanors. An

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unhoused individual who qualifies for the Homeless Court will be linked with services and programs to get them housing-ready, leading to them entering housing and having their pending charges dismissed. Since its inception in September 2020, the Redondo Beach Homeless Court has permanently housed 22 individuals. Its success has led the City of Long Beach and Torrance to pursue similar models as well. Despite their success, these programs do not have an ongoing or consistent source of funding. The lack of funding calls into question their longevity and also may deter other cities from implementing the program.

Assembly Bill 2220 (AB 2220) authored by Assembly Member Al Muratsuchi aims to address that problem by introducing state funding for Homeless Courts across California. AB 2220 will establish a competitive-grant pilot program administered by the Judicial Council to create a homeless courts plan that includes a community-based framework. This framework has been developed with an allowance for local considerations in order to create a replicable standard for success. This will provide much needed funding to both support the existing Homeless Courts like those in Redondo Beach, Long Beach, and Torrance and to also expand the model to other cities and jurisdictions.

Homeless Court alone will not solve the County's homelessness epidemic, but it will provide us with another tool to help people get the help and support that they need. Homeless Court programs can intercept the jail-to-streets cycle by diverting unhoused individuals with low level criminal charges away from jail and connecting them to the variety of supports and services that they need to enter and stay in housing. AB 2220 will provide funding to help the County and our cities implement these programs.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch to support AB 2220 (Muratsuchi), legislation to create the Homeless Courts Pilot Program to provide community-based services to chronically homeless individuals who are involved with the criminal justice system.

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