

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL**

May 3, 2022

**Los Angeles County Declaration and Adoption of the Housing First Model**

In 2016, California Legislators followed national best practices on housing and homelessness and declared California as a Housing First State by passing [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1380](#). Serving as California State Senator, Holly J. Mitchell passed SB 1380 to align with empirically proven evidence-based practices known nationwide and internationally as the Housing First Model. Homelessness experts agree that there is overwhelming [evidence](#) to support that the Housing First Model reduces and prevents future homelessness.

The Housing First Model was first introduced by psychologists in the United States (U.S.) and was adopted and studied abroad in Europe and New Zealand in the early 1990's in response to growing homeless populations in major cities. In the U.S., the effects of the Housing First Model have been studied for over three decades. In longitudinal [studies](#) conducted on homelessness and housing outcomes—we have observed that when our homelessness system integrate the Housing First Model in housing programs—88% of the participants remain housed over long periods of time and have better outcomes of re-integration into society than their counterparts who were housed through the traditional homelessness system at 47%.

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Similarly, [studies](#) in Europe comparing the Housing First Model to those of the Shelter First approach have found that in the long run—the Housing First Model is more cost-effective for governments and taxpayers than investing predominantly in the shelter system. Similar studies have been conducted here in the U.S. and in Australia which find that for unhoused people suffering from health conditions, the Housing First Model saves the health care system and our homelessness system close to \$5,000 per person, per year. It also saves over \$2,000 per person, per year in the justice system, as it prevents continued incarceration and involvement in other justice-related areas, which we know exacerbates and prolongs homelessness.

Although the Housing First Model was introduced and studied empirically three decades ago with relation to its effects on solving homelessness—the idea that a safe home is the very first step in the process of healing from trauma, addiction and adverse health effects is not new. It is in fact one of the oldest and widely accepted theories and has been at the forefront of psychology for hundreds of years. Theories which studied stages of basic needs such as [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) introduced by psychologist Abraham Maslow in 1943—have been used to understand the stages of human motivation and healing since the early 20th century.

The concept of the Housing First Model follows the science associated with motivation theory which notes the inability for the human body and brain to find motivation to work, heal from addiction and adverse health conditions, and/or life experiences and make meaningful strides integrating into mainstream society until their very basic need for food and housing is stabilized. This science is accepted by psychologists and health care providers across the globe.

For this reason, the State of California has voted to adopt the Housing First Model as the most basic and essential step in the challenging and arduous process of helping our residents heal from addiction, physical and mental trauma, and rise out of homelessness.

[SB 1284](#) (Bates) calls to undo the meaningful strides we are making as a State, pioneering in evidence-based practices to address the most challenging social issues of our time such as homelessness, mental illness, and incarceration. SB 1284 seeks to remove the Housing First Model and undermine the commitment we have made to our

unhoused residents to provide a safe place prior to asking them to seek treatment for their physical and mental health conditions and before we ask them to re-integrate successfully back into society and the workforce.

SB 1284 claims that removing the Housing First Model from our homelessness system will improve our ability to solve homelessness by “assisting local governments to plan, fund, and accelerate Shelter First projects while the State simultaneously moves towards its long-term goal of housing.” Today, experts and local governments alike—agree that in order to solve homelessness—we need to invest in [5 permanent housing beds for every 1 interim shelter bed](#) we build. Investing in Shelter First only redirects our limited funds, time and energy to a temporary solution which we know from evidence does not solve or end homelessness.

In fact, it creates a shelter trap system, drains our housing system of funding, and prolongs homelessness in the process. We have an abundance of evidence for this—including [Shelter First models](#) like those in New York which invest over \$2 billion annually on shelters. New York is unable to house their unhoused residents. In fact, their homelessness rates rise each year and the unhoused cycle in and out of shelters and fall into the trap of permanent homelessness.

**I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

Declare the County of Los Angeles a Housing First County—in alignment with our experts and providers on homelessness and oppose Senate Bill 1284.

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