

October 18, 2022

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

Immediate Action for the Growing Number of Latinos Experiencing Homelessness

On September 8, 2022, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) released the results of the 2022 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. On any given night in the County of Los Angeles, there are 69,144 people experiencing homelessness (PEH). Of that number, approximately 29,000 identify as Hispanic/Latino. This is a 26% increase in the number of unhoused Latinos in the County of Los Angeles since 2020. The increase is stark in comparison to other demographic groups. For example, the number of Asian Pacific Islander PEH decreased 23% from 2020 to 2022. The number of White PEH decreased by 21% and the number of Black PEH decreased by 9%. The increase of Latino PEH significantly outpaces the overall count of PEH in Los Angeles County, which only grew by 4% from 2020 to 2022.

For many years, Latinos were significantly underrepresented in Los Angeles County's Homeless Count. In 2020, despite making up roughly 49% of the County's population, Latinos accounted for only 36% of unhoused Angelenos. Now, Latinos are roughly 45% of the County's PEH. The 2022 Homeless Count numbers may signal an end to what has previously been referred to as the "Latino paradox"- while Latinos experience high rates of poverty, they appeared to be less likely to fall into homelessness. The paradox was often explained by pointing to strong family and social ties that prevented homelessness among Latinos. It is also true that homelessness tends to look different for Latino residents - living in cars, converted garages, often disconnected from the

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homeless services system.

While the cause of this shift is not clear, COVID-19 could be a factor. Many Latinos work in sectors with the highest rates of unemployment during the pandemic, including food services and hospitality. Older undocumented workers who lost employment at the outset of the pandemic face the greatest barriers to re-entering the workforce: advanced age and lack of employment authorization. Many Latinos who lost work during the pandemic likely had limited savings and may have already been living in overcrowded housing. Further, Latinos faced significant barriers in accessing pandemic relief programs. While billions of dollars in rent relief and boosted unemployment benefits likely kept people in their homes, many Latinos faced language barriers and internet access problems when trying to apply for California's rent relief program. A recent UCLA study found that Latinos were about half as likely as white Californians to have applied for, and to have received, rent relief. Federal unemployment benefits were also inaccessible to some Latinos who did not have U.S. work authorization.

California has taken important steps to improve the social safety net for all Latino residents. These include the recent expansion of Medi-Cal to all income-eligible Californians aged 50 and older. The 2022-2023 state budget also allows income-eligible adults aged 55 and older to access CalFresh benefits upon implementation. Despite these important safety net benefit expansions, significant gaps remain. The population of older undocumented immigrants has grown in recent years and is projected to increase significantly in the coming decade. Older adults face the difficult choice of returning to their country after decades in the U.S. or remaining in

the U.S. without employment or legal status. Older undocumented adults cannot access Social Security benefits even if they have paid into the system for decades. This reality places significant financial burden on the families of older and disabled undocumented adults and greatly increases their risk of becoming unhoused.

On October 19, 2021, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion directing LAHSA to improve outreach and services for immigrants and undocumented individuals experiencing homelessness. LAHSA followed with recommendations around cross-training for homeless service providers and immigrant legal service providers to ensure that those serving immigrants experiencing homelessness are well-informed and can effectively connect them to services. While this is a positive first step in addressing the increasing number of Latino PEH, the Board of Supervisors must consider additional means to prevent increases and reduce the overall number of unhoused Latino residents. LAHSA will soon establish a working group to address the growing numbers of Latinos experiencing homelessness. It is important that the County work with LAHSA to assess the County's own system of services and better understand the crisis. Addressing the increasing number of Latinos falling into homelessness will help address the County's homelessness crisis more broadly and ensure that County resources are distributed effectively and equitably to serve all Angelenos in need.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office's (CEO) Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) to work in tandem with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA) working group on Latino homelessness to assess how gaps in the County social service system can result in increased numbers of Latinos falling into

homelessness. This includes:

1. Leveraging qualitative and quantitative data from the Department of Health Services' Housing for Health's Homeless Prevention Unit (HPU) to gain insights on the number of Latinos at risk of falling into homelessness and the success of HPU's intervention for Latinos.
2. Consulting with the CEO Homeless Initiative, the Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, the Los Angeles County Development Authority, and the County's Departments of Health Services, Mental Health, Public and Social Services, Public Health, Children and Family Services, Aging and Disabilities, and Employment Opportunities as well as representatives from Latino-serving non-profits, faith-based organizations, and Latinos with lived experience of homelessness to:
 - a. Identify gaps in the County's homeless services continuum for Latino residents.
 - b. Determine what barriers, including Indigenous language barriers, may prevent Latinos from accessing County mainstream services and collect best practices for effective engagement and successful outcomes.
 - c. Assess whether social services and housing programs managed by the County are equitably accessed by Latinos and whether outcomes for those services are equitable.
3. Develop Countywide strategies and policy recommendations for reversing the trend of growing Latino homelessness, incorporating the recommendations from LAHSA's report back on the October 2021 motion to better serve immigrants and undocumented PEH as well as best practices from the Black People Experiencing Homelessness (BPEH) Steering Committee efforts to further address racial disproportionality in homelessness.
4. Report back in writing on the above directives in 180 days.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the CEO Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) to report back in 180 days on the below directives and authorize the CEO, or her

designee, to retain a consultant and execute a contract, with any necessary amendments to do the following:

1. Identify opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the County's social safety net to prevent homelessness broadly.
2. Assess how the County's safety net can reduce disparities and be responsive to changing trends in who becomes homeless.

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