

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS DON KNABE
AND MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

April 19, 2011

Since January 2008, the General Relief (GR) caseload has increased by 73%, from 63,000 to 109,000, with a dramatic increase in costs to the County from \$148 million to \$219 million. Additional increases expected this year and next fiscal year will put the costs for this program over the \$300 million mark, an amount equivalent to the annual cost to run one of our County hospitals. As of December 2010, the Los Angeles County GR caseload consisted of 70% of the total statewide population receiving GR. It is more than 80 times larger than the combined GR caseload for Riverside, San Bernardino, and Orange Counties.

Last year, on Supervisor Knabe's motion, the Board unanimously approved the General Relief Restructuring Plan, which calibrated the County's efforts to focus on strengthening the two positive paths off of GR: pursuing employment or disability benefits. We are starting to see progress. In the last seven months of 2010, almost 15,000 individuals have transitioned off of GR and into jobs or onto disability benefits. We expect to see these numbers increase, as our restructuring strategies – including stronger medical evaluations and increased availability of housing vouchers – begin to take hold.

While we have moved strongly towards maximizing scarce taxpayer resources to aid those who are on the path to pursuing employment or disability benefits, we cannot ignore the fact that one-half of GR assistance payments are made to individuals who are not pursuing either of these positive paths. There has to be a more appropriate way to address this portion of the caseload. It would also be prudent at this time to examine the program as a whole to determine where overall costs could be reduced.

-- MORE --

MOTION

MOLINA _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

YAROSLAVSKY _____

KNABE _____

ANTONOVICH _____

WE, THEREFORE MOVE THAT the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office and the Director of Public Social Services, in consultation with County Counsel, to report back to the Board as part of the final budget in June with a comprehensive plan to reduce costs for administering the General Relief (GR) program, including proposals to:

- 1) Time limit the receipt of GR cash assistance for participants who are not pursuing employment or disability benefits, providing in-kind housing assistance in lieu of cash assistance for this population;
- 2) Direct 50% of any net savings in GR assistance from the implementation of this proposal into the GR Anti-Homelessness Account, with the remaining 50% directed to the County General Fund; and
- 3) Review the County's policies and procedures that govern the GR program; comparing them to other counties to determine which policies exceed the legal mandates the County has in administering GR and providing recommendations for changes, including how the recommended changes would reduce costs for administering the GR program. These changes could include, but are not limited to, modifications to sanction policy for noncompliance with GR program rules; property and asset limits; and/or the documentation required to demonstrate residency in Los Angeles County.

#####

NI:e