

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND HOLLY J. MITCHELL

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**Promoting Faith Community Involvement in the Countywide Movement to Prevent and Combat Homelessness**

The faith community has a time-honored tradition of providing tangible supportive services to those in need, such as programs providing comfort, free meals, clothing, showers, on-site shelter, and hosting health clinics. They put into practice their core faith tenet to unconditionally open their doors and serve society’s marginalized and those unwelcomed by others. Places of worship are also natural sites where immigrants or those with no or limited English proficiency visit because, in addition to supporting their faith traditions, they provide a culturally and linguistically safe haven. Lastly and most notably, communities of faith provide hope and fill the human need for deep connectedness and relationships.

With the understanding that faith-based organizations (FBOs) play a pivotal role in homeless services, the Faith Collaborative to End Homelessness (formerly the Faith Working Group) launched in 2018 to coordinate partnership efforts with FBOs across Los Angeles County and developed a strategic plan to fold FBO homeless services into Los

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Angeles County's (County) homeless service delivery system. The Faith Collaborative to End Homelessness consists of faith leaders, homelessness liaisons, and leads from various County agencies and elected offices.

The homelessness crisis across the County has reached historic proportions, with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) reporting a record 66,436 unhoused in the latest 2020 Homeless Count. We anticipate these numbers to dramatically increase resulting from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent efforts such as "Project Room Key" (PRK) clearly demonstrate the tremendous strain on the current homelessness response system. While several County departments, LAHSA, and homeless service providers were called upon to fill PRK operational gaps as this project was initially operationalized at the start of this health crisis, this approach was unsustainable. In separate efforts to expand system capacity, LAHSA is increasingly issuing Requests for Information rather than Requests for Proposals, hoping to reach out to untapped organizations.

The faith community is an extremely under-utilized resource. Many congregations already provide services unknown to mainstream homelessness system partners, with others eager to develop or expand their programs to utilize their congregants and property, but lack the knowledge and resources to do so. While there have been past initiatives to mobilize their efforts, they have fallen short in part because of the failure to recognize their needs and forcing them to conform to cumbersome systems already in place. A formal, wide-ranging strategy for inviting and sustaining communities of faith to be fully integrated partners in ending homelessness is needed. This first requires a comprehensive understanding of what services faith communities are currently providing

and what barriers they face in expanding and aligning these services with mainstream homelessness systems.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Acting Chief Executive Officer, to procure a consultant or consultants for at least six months to:

- a. Conduct a countywide survey of faith-based organizations (FBOs) – especially those that have a mission to address homelessness and/or have engaged in homelessness-related efforts – in collaboration with the Faith Collaborative to End Homelessness, other faith collaboratives, and individual congregations to understand how FBOs provide support and services to people experiencing homelessness or those living in poverty. Using interviews to the extent possible, this activity shall collect information including, but not limited to: identifying the specific services provided; program cost; the number of people served monthly; the demographics of those served; the local geographic area they cover; and surplus property available for housing. In addition, the survey should include the capacity and willingness of the FBOs to provide services related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other natural or man-made disasters, such as providing space and volunteers for shelter, immunizations, testing, food distributions, outreach campaigns, etc., as may be needed to support broader homelessness efforts.
- b. From the results of this survey:
  - i. Identify what capacity building and development supports are essential, no matter the size of the congregation, to (1) grow their programs; or (2) align them with current County-led homelessness efforts.
  - ii. Identify the financial and structural barriers that are limiting their ability

to expand existing programs or to create new ones.

- iii. Identify possible future funding sources and procurement strategies easily accessible to FBOs, including philanthropy and low-interest loan opportunities for capital costs.
- c. Guided by the information from (a) and (b), develop a strategy to fully integrate the faith community into homelessness and other solutions across the County, to include specific targeted gaps that can be filled; the tailoring of funding opportunities; better integration with County departments and County-led efforts; communication mechanisms to keep FBOs apprised of the dynamic needs of the homelessness delivery system and how they can provide information about services directly to underserved populations.
- d. Make recommendations on the creation of a County Faith Commission on Homelessness.
- e. Report back to the Board in three months in writing with an interim status report on this effort.

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