

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND  
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JULY 27, 2021

**ESTABLISHING A BLUE-RIBBON COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS**

Nearly 28 years ago, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles City Council, and the City of Los Angeles Mayor established the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to better coordinate the City and County’s response to the growing homelessness crisis.

A Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) was formed with the primary intent of blending multiple strategies into a singular, centralized homeless services delivery system. This JPA established a ten-member Commission that governs LAHSA and is comprised of five members appointed by the Los Angeles City Mayor and confirmed by the Los Angeles City Council and five members appointed and approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. LAHSA’s governing Commission convenes monthly and has authority over budgeting, funding, planning, and program policy decisions. These board meetings are subject to the Brown Act. The City and the County of Los Angeles each contributed half of LAHSA’s initial budget, however as LAHSA has grown into the lead agency in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care and with the passage of Measure H it was estimated that in Fiscal Year 2020-2021 the County of Los Angeles contributed roughly 50% of LAHSA’s annual Budget and the City contributed 30%.

Amidst increasing homelessness, Measure H was proposed and promptly approved by County residents in March 2017 to provide additional funding to LAHSA for essential services to bring the unhoused off the streets. This quarter-cent increase to the County’s sales tax has been used to help provide an ongoing revenue stream (which is an estimated \$400 million per year) for ten years to fund homeless services, rental subsidies, and housing. As we come upon the halfway point of Measure H, it is essential that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Los Angeles City Council ensure that an ideal governance structure is in place to address the ever-increasing homelessness crisis.

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Last year, in response to increasing concerns regarding competing priorities in the delivery of homeless services and LAHSA's ambiguous structure of accountability, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion (February 11, 2020), which revisited LAHSA's structure and function and solicited recommendations from the Chief Executive Officer, Auditor-Controller, County Counsel, LAHSA leadership, and other relevant county Departments to improve governance, performance, accountability, and transparency.

This report and many of the presentations and recommendations were ultimately delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic which swept through Los Angeles shortly thereafter. Thus, in April 2021, a presentation was given with recommendations that sought to strengthen LAHSA's operations by implementing a strategic plan which would incorporate feedback from individuals with lived experience, enhance LAHSA's communications by including data transparency via dashboards that track program progress to inform policy, and bolstering their Government & Community Relations team to increase visibility across the broader County of Los Angeles. Additionally, there was concurrence that LAHSA should seek to establish role clarity by working with LAHSA's Governing Commission, the Los Angeles Continuum of Care Board, the Coordinated Entry System Policy Council, and the Lived Experience Advisory Board to determine when they are acting in an advisory capacity and when they are acting as workgroups establishing recommendations on specific policies and program areas. LAHSA's own Ad Hoc Committee on Governance recommended undertaking a review to determine LAHSA's actual legal authority and identify whether it has sufficient independence and decision-making authority to carry out its responsibilities.

In September of 2020, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion to explore new governance models and sought to improve accountability and oversight of homeless funds. This built upon a 2018 Board motion that recommended the Auditor-Controller and CEO conduct quarterly reviews of the eight Measure H strategies administered by LAHSA to ensure increased accountability.

Furthermore, on June 18th, 2021, the City of Los Angeles reviewed LAHSA's governing structure and a motion was introduced to explore LAHSA's governance structure and assess the process, implications, and impact of withdrawing from the JPA. This motion was sent to the City's Homelessness and Poverty Committee for review. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the City's Homelessness and Poverty Committee announced a proposal that would seek to address LAHSA Governance by establishing an intergovernmental body comprised of City and County experts.

These efforts indicate that there are fundamental challenges with the existing LAHSA structure. Based on the urgency of the situation and the collaboration of these efforts, the County must immediately analyze the LAHSA governance report (Issued in February 2021) recommendations, review LAHSA's existing governance structures, investigate additional governance models, and explore the process of renegotiating and/or the implications of withdrawal from the LAHSA Joint Powers Agreement. These independent reviews and recommendations on reforms should come through the establishment and appointment of a Blue-Ribbon Commission on Homelessness (BRCH).

The mission of BRCH shall be to conduct a comprehensive study of LAHSA's Governance structure by reviewing existing reports and recommendations, identify and analyze the challenges inherent to the existing system, and to provide recommendations to change and improve its efficiency. The BRCH shall be tasked with developing the framework of a transparent, inclusive, and accountable governance system that has measurable outcomes and can execute its functions and duties effectively. Furthermore, it shall review and analyze the relationship between LAHSA, homeless service providers, cities, the county (CEO-HI), non-profit and community sectors to provide recommendations that enhance collaboration and increase coordination among stakeholders countywide. The BRCH should also seek to renew public confidence in a collaborative, countywide effort to combat homelessness.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:**

1. Establish a Blue-Ribbon Commission on Homelessness (BRCH) that shall be directed to research and analyze various homelessness governance reports, studying models from across the nation, and providing feedback to the Board regarding the most relevant and effective models with the intention of implementing reform to help solve the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles County. The BRCH shall provide a report that includes recommendations for a new governance model that is appropriate for Los Angeles County (addressing the existing Joint Powers Authority) - incorporating the diverse needs of the region and its 88 cities, and reflecting the various legal and legislative issues that are impacting homelessness policy. The report and its recommendations should seek to enhance accountability, transparency, and inclusivity. The report should include recommendations on how cities, Councils of Government, or regional representatives could be incorporated into an effective governance structure to address the homelessness crisis:
  - a. The BRCH shall be comprised of nine members. Five members of the BRCH shall be appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, with one member appointed by each Supervisor; one member shall be nominated by the Mayor of Los Angeles; one member shall be nominated by the Los Angeles City Council President; one member shall be nominated by the Contract Cities Association; and one member shall be nominated by the Councils of Government. Given the urgency of this situation, nominations to this BRCH shall be submitted for final approval at the Board of Supervisors meeting of August 10<sup>th</sup>.
  - b. The BRCH shall submit its final report and recommendations six months from its first meeting.
  - c. The BRCH shall meet bi-weekly starting (September 7<sup>th</sup>) (subcommittee meetings may occur with more frequency as needed), with the stated goal of drafting a report that includes actionable recommendations.
  - d. The BRCH shall sunset upon completion of the report.

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2. Direct the CEO and the Executive Office, in consultation with County Counsel, to work with other relevant County departments, as necessary to report back on August 31<sup>st</sup> regarding a staffing and funding plan for the BRCH which should include dedicated staff and technological capabilities to facilitate virtual/in-person meetings in compliance with the Brown Act. The makeup of staff should include a combination of paid staff and pro-bono professional support in conjunction with assistance provided from various County departments.
3. Presentations made to the BRCH to help inform its work should include, but not be limited to, the following:
  - a. County Counsel, in conjunction with CEO-HI, shall provide a briefing and presentation to the BRCH on the existing Joint Powers Agreement, its powers, limitations, and the fiscal and operational implications of the County's renegotiation and/or withdrawal from the Joint Powers Agreement.
  - b. CEO-HI, in conjunction with LAHSA and the Measure H Citizen's Advisory Board, shall provide a briefing and presentation to the BRCH on the homeless strategies currently funded by Measure H. This briefing should include a breakdown of the contracts to homeless service providers and examine the scope of/limitations of Measure H funding.
  - c. Feedback from city representatives from each Supervisorial District on their local experience in addressing homelessness and access to Measure H funding.
  - d. Feedback from service providers from each SPA, including barriers and challenges they have experienced in serving people experiencing homelessness.
  - e. Feedback from the Department of Regional Planning, Department of Public Works, and Los Angeles County Development Authority on approaches to strengthen collaboration and efforts to streamline increased affordable housing.
  - f. Feedback from the Department of Mental Health and Department of Public Health on approaches to increase access to and improve the effectiveness of mental health and substance abuse services.

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