

REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND
HILDA L. SOLIS

MAY 3, 2022

IMPLEMENT THE BLUE-RIBBON COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS'
RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the growing humanitarian crisis of homelessness, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the Blue-Ribbon Commission on Homelessness (BRCH) on July 27, 2021. The mission of the BRCH was to conduct a comprehensive study of Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA) governance structure by reviewing existing reports and prior recommendations, as well as thoroughly identifying and analyzing the challenges inherent in the existing system. The goal of the BRCH was to provide a factually compelling report and actionable recommendations reflecting the urgency for refined governance models that can deliver improved and accelerated results incorporating the diverse needs of the Los Angeles region, its 88 cities, and the unincorporated communities of the County.

Over the past six months - through an extensive series of meetings, presentations, interviews, and listening sessions - the BRCH received testimony from hundreds of individuals representing cities, Councils of Government, County departments, unincorporated jurisdictions, school districts, faith-based organizations (FBO), persons with lived expertise,

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service providers, subject matter experts, homeless service systems leaders from around the nation, and authors of prior governance reports reviewing the current system's strengths and weaknesses. The BRCH took great care to ensure that the underrepresented voices of the Black, Latinx, LGBTQI+, foster youth, and senior communities were heard.

In turn, the BRCH developed a framework for a transparent, inclusive, and accountable governance system that has measurable outcomes and can execute its functions and duties effectively. Based on the clear and urgent need for systems change, following months of deliberation and discussion, the BRCH unanimously approved the following seven (7) recommendations:

1. Establish a County Entity and Identify a Leader

The BRCH recommends the creation of a County entity and for the County to identify a leader that can unify the work product of various departments and agencies thus eliminating existing silos to create a more transparent and effective response to homelessness that fully incorporates mainstream systems. As envisioned, the entity could lead on homelessness with a focus on prevention; rehousing; housing acquisition; accountability for timely contracting and payments; access to health care, including mental health and substance-use disorder treatment; and access to urgent services (e.g., 24/7 outreach and housing services, including on weekends, from a single-point-of-contact phone number) in a sustainable way. This entity does not need to be large, nor should it result in a new, lumbering bureaucracy.

The County entity should also convene work groups where the entity charged with ending homelessness convenes stakeholders to develop goals, policy, and implementation plans across systems in the areas of Higher Levels of Care, Access to Treatment, Encampment Closures, Discharge Planning, Criminal Justice System, and Prevention & Diversion.

Finally, the entity would lead in the creation of regional committees, organized in a manner determined by the region, with representatives from cities and unincorporated areas, to convene on issues relating to homelessness, including but not limited to Measure H.

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2. Measure H / Local Solutions

The BRCH recommends the County establish multi-year local solutions fund available for jurisdictions that will commit to providing in-kind or matching contributions for the development of service programs and/or housing. Any such program should not detract from or take dollars away from the successful work done by our stakeholders, and we must ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion remain at the forefront of any local solutions program.

3. Streamline LAHSA

The BRCH recommends that the County take steps to streamline LAHSA by re-focusing the authority back to its primary role as lead of the Greater Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC) and by transitioning away from providing direct services. In the interim, the BRCH also recommends that LAHSA maintain the current number of seats on the LAHSA Commission, but the County take steps to change who sits in them (e.g., County department heads, those with lived expertise, Councils of Governments, or city representatives) with respect to County-appointed seats.

4. Continuum of Care Leadership

The BRCH recommends that the County take steps to simplify the governance of the Greater Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC) by consolidating the LAHSA Commission, CoC Board, and Coordinated Entry System (CES) Policy Council into a single, cohesive decision-making entity. This may require negotiations with the City of Los Angeles to revise the LAHSA Joint Powers Agreement and CoC Charter, and any resulting board would need to comply with HUD regulations. A single board should be developed with a focus on equity and should include members from other cities, COGs, persons with lived expertise, persons with subject-matter expertise, business representatives, and FBO representation.

This could also include representation from transition-age youth, family, and senior communities. While consolidating these various bodies should be pursued, it should be done concurrent with, and not in place of, other reforms that can be implemented in the short term.

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As an interim step, during the period prior to consolidating the LAHSA Commission, CoC Board, and CES Policy Council into a single board, the BRCH recommends that the Board direct department heads to sit on the CES Policy Council.

5. Improve LAHSA Operations

The BRCH recommends that the County support efforts to improve LAHSA's operations immediately by, among other recommendations, (i) drawing clearer lines of authority between the LAHSA Commission, the Office of Executive Director, and the various other boards that sit within LAHSA or the CoC and (ii) embedding an "Ops Team" to maximize LAHSA's internal effectiveness. As to the latter recommendation, the Ops Team should focus on, but not be limited to, defining decision-making responsibilities; ensuring that LAHSA's executive team has the depth, resources, and support to operate an organization of the size and complexity of LAHSA; supporting ongoing efforts to improve contracting operations; streamlining procurement processes; improving payment systems; supporting ongoing efforts to ensure that providers are paid on time or provided with technical assistance; improving communications; and ensuring more outreach work is performed on weekends and holidays with existing or added resources.

6. Data and Metrics

The BRCH recommends that the County demand data and metrics excellence from LAHSA, County departments, and cities within the County by requiring data sharing between cities, the County, and LAHSA. This includes but is not limited to providing cities access to data maintained within our region's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to better inform the efficiency of programs and services offered.

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The County, led by a County entity, should take charge and ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to information sharing across County departments and LAHSA. Relatedly, the BRCH recommends that the County define and implement metrics of success, track equity goals, and establish tools for accountability as well as develop formulas for tracking, in a more comprehensive manner, Measure H funding and other funds supporting people experiencing homelessness.

7. Executive Level Action Team

The BRCH recommends that the County support efforts to establish an executive-level action team to drive urgently needed reforms, discuss issues of common interest, and facilitate data development and sharing. Our system lacks a forum for convening decision-makers and thought leaders from across the region to discuss goal setting, policy, funding, fundraising, philanthropic initiatives, operations, data, equity, and the “fair share” of resources. To date, neither the County nor City has formally expressed support for an executive-level action team, but at the same time, neither has opposed the concept. The County should lead the way on standing up a body of this nature.

The adoption of the BRCH recommendations, as specified in this Motion, is necessary for a new beginning, an approach to homelessness which -

- Embraces wholeheartedly a whatever-it-takes attitude to tackle the many issues that impact homelessness and to end homelessness.
- Turns the page on a one-size-fits-all approach, recognize there are as many ways out of homelessness as there are into homelessness and acknowledges that “the streets cannot be the waiting room for permanent housing.”
- Pivots to a region-wide approach that allows for and incorporates local solutions by partnering with cities and service providers more directly because homelessness demands both a regional response and flexibility for solutions tailored to the needs of a given community.
- Allows for the various approaches identified to address homelessness to coexist in our ecosystem.

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- Replaces rigid decision-making with flexibility, lumbering administrative practices and policies with nimbleness, and gridlock in governance with clarity and momentum.
- Demands that equity, diversity, and inclusion be woven into the fabric of homelessness system governance; improves data collection, analysis, and collaborative research to better understand and track issues affecting underrepresented communities; incorporates equity principles into decision-making; and aligns our system with the County's anti-racism policy agenda.
- Strikes a balance between dedicating funds where people experiencing homelessness reside and allowing regions to receive funding, to develop leadership infrastructure, and to innovate. We need to seed capacity.

As the economic hardships of the pandemic and global health crisis continue to challenge our region with a disproportionate impact on our most vulnerable, we continue to see an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness. This growth cannot be ignored. The status quo is not acceptable. There is a lot of work to do.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

1. Adopt the seven BRCH recommendations.
2. Instruct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to maximize continuity of analysis and implementation of BRCH recommendations by working in consultation with the BRCH Executive Director and staff, as well as any subject matter experts, as necessary, until such time that the County has established the new County entity and appointed a leader of such entity or as otherwise determined by the Board; and provide quarterly, written status reports on the implementation of the following actions:
3. ~~Instruct the CEO and BRCH staff to take the following actions and provide quarterly status reports.~~

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Recommendation No. 1: Create a County Entity and Identify a County Leader

- Coordinate with County Counsel, Auditor-Controller, Internal Services Department, and others as necessary to analyze and provide a recommendation for the form and structure of the county entity for homelessness matters within the County. Such analysis shall consider, but not be limited to, funding impacts, staffing needs, organizational plan, the duties, and functions for such an entity, and any necessary changes in law to effectuate the establishment of this County entity. The report should clearly outline how to provide the entity sufficient authority to oversee homelessness funding and strategies beyond Measure H. It should also delineate the relationship between the County entity and other entities that administer homeless funding, including County Departments, Continua of Care (including LAHSA), cities, Councils of Government, and the Los Angeles Development Authority (LACDA). The analysis should address how the entity shall focus on prevention, rehousing, housing acquisition, access to medical care, including care for mental health and substance abuse disorders, accountability for timely contracting and payments, urgent access to services (e.g., 24/7 outreach and housing services, including on weekends, from a single-point-of-contact phone number). The analysis should include the possibility of expanding the role of an existing County office or department to execute the functions of this new entity.
- Coordinate the following:
 - Convene work groups consisting of various departments, service providers, and other stakeholders to meet at least quarterly.
 - Convene regional committees of representatives from unincorporated areas and cities, with boundaries considered by SPA or COG, and an internal governance structure to be determined by each committee, to solicit input with respect to matters relating to homelessness, including but not limited to the allocation or use of Measure H funds for any local solutions, initiatives, or funds.

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- Select a neutral, third-party facilitator to work with regional committees to facilitate communications and assist with systems plans and local strategic plans for homelessness.
- Review and implement the strategies that are currently in development to integrate the faith-based community into the County's overall response to homelessness.

BRCH Recommendation No. 2: Measure H / Local Solutions

- Establish the local solutions fund and identify ongoing multiyear funds earmarked for local solutions for jurisdictions that will make a commitment to provide in-kind or matching contributions for the development of service programs, housing or to share data.
- Implement the local solutions fund program. This process should include an assessment of the existing funds that fund local solutions for homelessness to effectively incorporate those programs into the new local solutions fund.
- Develop a method for tracking the expenditure of Measure H funds and other County homelessness dollars by County departments, LAHSA, and LACDA on a city-by-city basis.
- Review and revise the existing goals and metrics that determine the success of County funded homeless programs and ensure that County Departments, LAHSA, and LACDA programmatic oversight aligns with those goals.

BRCH Recommendation No. 3: Streamline LAHSA

- Report on the feasibility of transitioning certain Measure H strategies, including outreach, from LAHSA to the County entity without service interruption. The report should include all implications of directing outreach services under the county entity as well any potential impact on service delivery to people experiencing homelessness, cost implications for the County, and impact on LAHSA employees.

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- Consider appointing relevant County department heads, County Entity Director or Homeless Initiative Director, individuals with lived experience, COG members or representatives from the 87 cities to the County's five seats on the LAHSA Commission.

BRCH Recommendation No. 4: Continuum of Care Governance (Modify CoC Leadership)

- Working with County Counsel, report back on the options to consolidate the LAHSA Commission, Continuum of Care Board, and CES Policy Council into a single body, including analysis of the appropriate size and composition, and the legal implications relating thereto.

BRCH Recommendation No. 5: Improve LAHSA's Operations

- Develop written policies defining the respective decision-making responsibilities of the LAHSA Commission, the Executive Director, and the various governance boards that sit within LAHSA, and submit those policies for review and approval by the LAHSA Commission within 90 days.
- Report back on the feasibility of establishing an Operations Team to be embedded in LAHSA to focus on improvements in contracting, procurement, payment systems, technical assistance, improving communications, weekend work, and to ensure LAHSA's executive team has the depth, resources, and support to operate an organization of the size and complexity of LAHSA.

BRCH Recommendation No. 6: Data and Metrics

- Develop policies and tools such as data agreements to govern (i) HMIS access between LAHSA, cities, and the County, and (ii) data input, sharing, access, and reporting of data relating to homelessness, to the extent compliant with law; and, to the extent applicable, submit those policies for review and approval by the LAHSA Commission within 90 days.

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- Analyze data system infrastructure improvements as well as financial investments that are necessary to better facilitate data input, sharing, access, and reporting of data.
- Provide centralized information technology and data governance to the extent necessary to observe whether County clients are experiencing homelessness and whether County clients are enrolled in homelessness services across all County data systems and information technology (centralized IT and data governance includes setting data collection standards, developing and producing system-level performance measures, developing operationally useful data integrations, and aligning County IT procurement and management to support data collection standards and performance measures).
- Review and revise existing metrics of success and tools for accountability for homeless service programs within the County, including an outline for getting system-wide buy in on those metrics of success and tools for accountability.
- Until a county entity is established, annually report on outcomes associated with programs supported by funds earmarked for homeless programs and align the allocation of such funds with programs that are successful.

BRCH Recommendation No. 7: Executive-Level Action Team

- Encourage philanthropy to convene a small, no more than 10-person group of executive-level leaders representing Los Angeles County, its 88 cities, the State, and other relevant stakeholders. We further encourage, within 30 days this “centering forum” of leadership, that it discuss setting interim goals requiring urgency to expedite homeless solutions for consideration and review by the BOS as well as establishing a unified ask to the state of California for help in expediting these solutions.

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WE, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the:

1. Department of Human Resources and subject matter experts to provide the Board with options and strategies for recruiting the most qualified candidate to serve as the County leader of the county entity; and
2. Directors of Children and Family Services, Health Services, Mental Health, Public Health, Public Social Services, and the Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Development Authority to assume voting authority, instead of their designees, for and attend the Coordinated Entry System Policy Council meetings until such time that the LAHSA Commission, CoC Board, and CES Policy Council are consolidated into a single body, and report back on steps needed to ensure that the head of the Homeless Initiative or County entity also occupies a seat on the CES Policy Council.

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