

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH  
AND KATHRYN BARGER**

January 10, 2023

**Proclamation of a Local Emergency for Homelessness in the County of Los Angeles**

As of early 2022, Los Angeles County had 69,144 unhoused residents, including 70% (48,548) that were unsheltered, the highest number of unsheltered persons in the Country. This crisis is not new and has significantly accelerated over the last decade. Since 2015, the number of unhoused individuals in Los Angeles County has increased by 55%, from 44,359 to 69,144. The residents of Los Angeles County see this crisis play out daily and desire an effective and compassionate solution.

The reasons individuals become unhoused are complicated and often multifaceted. Those that become unhoused are frequently rent-burdened, live paycheck-to-paycheck, and many report suffering from serious mental illness or substance abuse issues. One-time events such as job loss, medical incidents, significant unforeseen costs, and no-fault evictions, also often lead individuals to become unhoused. Because the reasons individuals become unhoused are complicated and multifaceted, the approach

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MOTION

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to assisting them must be the same. This approach requires the commitment of both local cities and the County, because each entity is responsible for different aspects of the solution with the County primarily responsible for mental health, general health, and social services.

On July 27, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion by Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Hilda L. Solis, to create a Blue-Ribbon Commission on Homelessness (BRCH) to assess existing structures and systems and provide recommendations on reforms to help Los Angeles County and its 88 cities solve homelessness. At the time, Supervisor Barger stated: "Homelessness is a major crisis affecting our communities at every level and it's time for sweeping changes to the system. This Blue-Ribbon Commission will be critical to help the County, in partnership with our 88 cities, identify the reforms and changes needed and to move forward with actions that can finally help our vulnerable residents who are suffering on the streets."

The BRCH outlined a variety of recommendations with many of them focused on the restructuring of the governance response to homelessness with a focus on simplification, urgency, and equity. Generally, the BRCH recommend establishing a single County entity to lead the response to homelessness; establishing multi-year funding for local jurisdictions; streamlining and improving Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) operations; simplifying the governance of the Greater Los Angeles Continuum of Care; utilizing data and metrics; and creating an executive-level action team. These recommendations were designed to streamline and expediate the response to homelessness and were adopted by the Board of Supervisors on May 3, 2022.

On December 12, 2022, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass declared a local

emergency, in the City of Los Angeles, to address homelessness. In response to Mayor Bass's emergency declaration, Supervisor Janice Hahn introduced a motion on December 20, 2022, to provide County support for the City of Los Angeles' emergency declaration. This motion directed key County staff to work with the City of Los Angeles to implement their emergency declaration. Additionally, on December 21, 2022, Long Beach Mayor Rex Richardson asked Long Beach city officials to draft an emergency declaration on homelessness, stating that "the crisis that we have requires us to move faster and with urgency." The Long Beach City Council will hold a vote on their emergency declaration on January 10, 2023. Together the cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach represent nearly one-half of the population of Los Angeles County, but two-thirds of the unhoused population. While Los Angeles and Long Beach represent the two largest cities in Los Angeles County, many other smaller cities in the County are also struggling to address homelessness. These smaller cities can permit new affordable housing in their jurisdictions through their land use powers, but in many cases rely on the County for funding and homelessness services. Without a coordinated effort between cities and the County we will not be able to effectively address homelessness.

Los Angeles County has experienced other emergencies over the decades, including earthquakes, wildland fires, civil unrest, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of these emergencies were unique and required different responses. Homelessness is a specific and prolonged emergency that is impacting more individuals than other emergencies. For example, the Northridge earthquake, one of the most significant local emergencies in recent history, killed approximately 60 individuals and displaced between 20,000-25,000 persons from their homes. By comparison, there are currently 69,000

unhoused individuals living in Los Angeles County, with nearly 2,000 of them passing away each year, which has been the status quo for several years.

These unfortunate numbers and trends are not acceptable as the status quo. The County of Los Angeles, as a major provider of services to unhoused individuals, must also proclaim a local emergency, in order to accelerate the response to homelessness throughout the County.

Los Angeles County may proclaim a local emergency when there is the “existence of conditions of disaster, or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the territorial limits of the County,” and when these conditions “are or are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of the County and require the combined forces of other political subdivisions to combat.” Homelessness meets these requirements for a local emergency. Conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons exist on the basis of pervasive and pernicious homelessness in Los Angeles County. In this regard, 69,000 individuals are presently unhoused in the County, and critically 2,000 of those unhoused individuals die each year. Additionally, solving homelessness is beyond the scope of County resources. Homelessness is a complicated and multifaceted issue that requires, among other things, the development of new affordable housing, including land-use policy decisions to permit such housing, which is a function of cities and of the County in unincorporated areas. The provision of services for unhoused individuals requires substantial County resources, in coordination with cities. Coordination, collaboration, and the combined forces of different jurisdictions are imperatively needed to combat the current conditions of homelessness. For these reasons it is necessary for Los Angeles County to proclaim a local emergency regarding

homelessness.

The County provides critical services to unhoused individuals, including general health, mental health, and substance abuse treatment services. Additionally, the County oversees significant portions of the criminal justice system. All of these services are an important part of the overall response to homelessness. Many of these services, provided by LAHSA and paid for by Measure H, have been working effectively; over the last four years more than 20,000 unhoused individuals have been placed into housing each year with nearly 90% remaining in housing. However, at the same time, tens of thousands of new individuals have become unhoused. While we have many solutions that are working, the scale and speed at which these solutions are being implemented needs to be expanded and expedited, respectively.

Proclaiming a local emergency to address this critical crisis will provide the County with additional tools to accelerate and expand its response through the Homeless Initiative and in collaboration with our city partners. These additional tools include, accelerated hiring of additional employees to address homelessness and mental health, the more effective and efficient use of funds, an expedited procurement of critical items, a faster and more streamlined creation of housing, expanded services, and the ability to request additional resources from the State and Federal governments. Initiatives to reduce vacancies in key County service departments will be critical to accelerating the response to homelessness, as detailed in a recent Los Angeles Times article titled "*Burned Out LA County Mental Health Workers Weigh Options*".<sup>1</sup> The proposed emergency proclamation is intended to facilitate and expediate County hiring by

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<sup>1</sup> [Burned out L.A. County mental health workers weigh options - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-fi-ln-burned-out-la-county-mental-health-workers-weigh-options-2018-07-26)

potentially offering bonuses, special step placements, higher salary schedules, and loan repayment programs.

The Chief Executive Office-Homeless Initiative (CEO-HI) is the central coordinating body for Los Angeles County's ongoing effort to expand and enhance services for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Under the new CEO-HI framework, adopted by the Board in May 2022, CEO-HI's efforts are driven by five actions - coordination, prevention, connection, housing, and stability through work with three key partners - the rehousing system, mainstream County government systems, and partnerships with cities and Councils of Governments (COGs). The response to other declared emergencies, such as natural disasters, would typically be led by the OEM, however, the CEO-HI is best suited to lead the overall coordination of the emergency response for this declaration.

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

1. Proclaim a local emergency for homelessness in the County of Los Angeles. This proclamation of local emergency shall remain in effect until its termination is proclaimed by the Board.
2. Approve and execute the attached proclamation of existence of local emergency for homelessness in the County of Los Angeles.
3. Direct the Chief Executive Office (CEO), Homeless Initiative (HI), and Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and all other County Departments to take necessary steps for the protection of life, health, and safety of people experiencing homelessness in the County of Los Angeles including:
  - a. Contracting and Procurement: Leveraging the lessons learned during the

- COVID-19 pandemic, direct the CEO and relevant County Departments to take appropriate steps to expedite the procurement and contracting processes for materials, equipment, and services necessary to respond rapidly to the homelessness crisis.
- b. Hiring: Direct the Department of Human Resources and relevant County Departments to expedite recruitment and hiring for positions necessary to respond to the homelessness crisis including any actions needed to quickly reduce vacancy levels for positions providing mental health, substance use disorder, health, and case management services directly to people experiencing homelessness.
  - c. Housing: Direct CEO-HI and relevant County Departments to accelerate timelines for the creation of licensed beds, interim housing, and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness and placement of clients in these housing resources, increase funding for local rental subsidies, and coordinate with local cities regarding the construction of permanent supportive housing (including funding).
  - d. Services: Direct CEO-HI and relevant County Departments to work directly with outreach teams and interim housing providers to provide accelerated access to mainstream County services, including but not limited to the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Public Health-Substance Use Prevention and Control (DPH-SAPC), the Department of Health Services (DHS), the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), to sheltered and unsheltered people

experiencing homelessness Countywide.

- e. Spending: Direct CEO and all relevant County Departments to identify strategic uses of restricted funding in order to alleviate the crisis among unhoused individuals and any State and Federal legislative relief required to use restricted funding as proposed and report back to the Board in 60 days on all available options.
  - f. Communication and Outreach: Direct the CEO, HI, OEM, and Countywide Communications to develop and implement a communication plan to interact with Los Angeles County cities and the public on the local emergency proclamation, including how the County will coordinate and work with cities, and how solutions will be implemented.
4. Direct CEO-HI to lead the overall coordination of the emergency response and to coordinate efforts with the State and Federal governments, and the cities within the County. Direct the CEO to report back in 14 days with the authorities needed, and requisite changes to implement the foregoing.
  5. Direct CEO to enable the HI to immediately assume a leadership role in managing the local emergency proclamation until the County entity responsible for homelessness is finalized and concurrently establish the infrastructure to maintain the efforts initiated under this local emergency proclamation. Report back to the Board in 21 days on necessary organizational changes, and resources required.
  6. Direct the CEO to report back in six months with an update on the local emergency proclamation, including data demonstrating the effectiveness of County efforts and if the efforts should in any way be modified.



7. Direct the CEO to report back in one year regarding whether the local emergency proclamation should be terminated, extended, or modified. Such recommendations shall be supported by data demonstrating the effectiveness of County efforts.
8. Direct the CEO-HI to develop a process for providing periodic reporting (at a minimum quarterly) to the Board on the expenditure of Measure H funds, in order to more accurately assess the effectiveness of the use of Measure H funds in conjunction with the local emergency proclamation and the overall coordinated response to homelessness.

**PROCLAMATION OF EXISTENCE OF A LOCAL EMERGENCY FOR HOMELESSNESS BY THE  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 2.68 of the Los Angeles County Code provides that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) may proclaim the existence of a "local emergency," as defined in Government Code section 8558(c), in pertinent part, as follows: "'[l]ocal emergency' means the duly proclaimed existence of conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the territorial limits of a county . . . caused by conditions such as air pollution, fire, flood, storm, epidemic, riot, drought, cyberterrorism, sudden and severe energy shortage, deenergization event . . . plant or animal infestation or disease . . . or an earthquake, or other conditions . . . which are or are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of that political subdivision and require the combined forces of other political subdivisions to combat . . ."; and

**WHEREAS**, as of January 10, 2023, conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons exist on the basis of pervasive and pernicious homelessness in Los Angeles County. In this regard, 69,000 individuals are presently unhoused in the County, and critically 2,000 of those unhoused individuals pass away each year. Additionally, solving homelessness is beyond the scope of County resources. Homelessness is a complicated and multifaceted issue that requires, among other things, the development of new affordable housing, including land use policy decisions to permit such housing. The provision of services for unhoused individuals requires substantial County resources, in coordination with cities. Coordination, collaboration, and the combined forces of different jurisdictions are imperatively needed to combat the current conditions of homelessness; and

**WHEREAS**, the mobilization of local resources, and the ability to coordinate interagency response, accelerate procurement of vital supplies, and use mutual aid, will be critical to successfully responding to the homelessness emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, these conditions warrant and necessitate that the County proclaim the existence of a local emergency.

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD FINDS THAT** conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons exist on the basis of pervasive and pernicious homelessness in Los Angeles County within the meaning of Government Code section 8558(c), and such conditions are or will likely be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of the County, and require the combined forces of other political subdivisions to combat; and

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AND PROCLAIMED** by the Board that a local emergency exists in the County; and

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND PROCLAIMED** that, during the existence of said local emergency, the powers, functions, and duties of the emergency organization of the County shall be those prescribed by State law, by ordinances, and resolutions of the County.

The foregoing proclamation was, on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of January 2023, adopted by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles and ex officio the governing body of all other special assessment and taxing districts, agencies, and authorities for which said Board so acts.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

By   
Chair



APPROVED AS TO FORM

DAWYN R. HARRISON  
Interim County Counsel

CELIA ZAVALA  
Executive Officer  
Board of Supervisors

By:   
Deputy

By:   
Deputy