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Evaluation and Preparation of Winter Shelter Program in Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County continues to face an ongoing humanitarian crisis as thousands of residents remain unsheltered and exposed to dangerous weather conditions during the winter months. Each year, the County relies on the Seasonal Winter Shelter Program and the Emergency Response Program to provide temporary shelter, motel vouchers, transportation, and life-safety services when storms, cold temperatures, and severe weather place people experiencing homelessness at heightened risk of injury, illness, and death.

Despite the life-saving role these programs play, they are supported through a fragile patchwork of annual City and County general fund appropriations and short-term emergency response allocations administered through the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and 211 LA. These funds must be renegotiated and re-appropriated each year and are not structured to automatically scale with increased need, more frequent storm events, or rising operational costs.

Recent winter seasons have made clear that this funding model is no longer sufficient. Storm events are becoming more frequent and severe, winter activations are occurring earlier and lasting longer, and demand for shelter beds and motel vouchers

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routinely exceeds available capacity. As a result, emergency shelter resources have been exhausted mid-season, motel vouchers have run out, and callers seeking help through 211 LA have been left with no available options. This has placed an untenable strain on frontline staff and created fear, frustration, and despair among people seeking basic protection from dangerous weather.

The Board of Supervisors has also taken action to fundamentally reform the County's homelessness governance structure through the creation of the new Los Angeles County Department of Homeless Services and Housing (HSH). This new Department is intended to assume direct responsibility for the planning, coordination, funding alignment, and accountability of the County's homeless response system, including interim housing, emergency shelter, and storm response operations that were previously administered or coordinated through LAHSA. As this transition proceeds, it is imperative that responsibility for winter shelter and emergency response be clearly centralized within this new Department to ensure stronger oversight, long-term planning, cross-jurisdictional coordination, and proactive preparation before storm events occur.

Geographic inequities for winter shelter access further compounds these systemic challenges. Service Planning Area (SPA) 3, which encompasses the San Gabriel Valley, remains severely underserved in terms of winter shelter capacity despite having a large and growing unsheltered population and limited low-barrier interim housing options. Residents experiencing homelessness in the San Gabriel Valley are often forced to travel long distances across other SPAs to access winter shelter sites, creating barriers to entry, undermining continuity of care, and discouraging utilization of available services.

Ensuring that the San Gabriel Valley has a dedicated Winter Shelter Program site is a matter of equity, public health, and life safety. Without a site located within SPA 3,

unsheltered individuals in this region face disproportionate risk during storm events and are less likely to access shelters when inclement weather threatens their safety.

Taken together, these conditions make it clear that the County's current approach to winter shelter and storm response is not sustainable. The system depends on year-to-year discretionary funding, lacks integration with Measure A, operates without guaranteed surge capacity, and leaves entire regions like the San Gabriel Valley without local shelter.

As the County transitions homelessness governance responsibilities from LAHSA to HSH, this moment presents a critical opportunity to stabilize winter shelter funding, embed emergency shelter into the County's long-term homelessness financing framework, correct geographic inequities in shelter access, and ensure that the San Gabriel Valley is no longer left behind during winter storms.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Homeless Services and Housing (HSH), in consultation with County Counsel, the Acting Chief Executive Officer, relevant County departments, and implementing partners to take immediate and ongoing actions to strengthen the County's Winter Shelter Program and Emergency Response Program as responsibilities transition from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to HSH, including:

1. Assuming operational leadership and accountability for the planning, coordination, contracting, and oversight of winter shelter and storm response operations;
2. Creating more efficiencies in the deployment of the County's Winter Shelter Program, including the issuance of motel vouchers offered by direct outreach teams and other identified providers, and shelter beds operated by contracted providers;
3. Increasing winter shelter and emergency response capacity, including expansion of

shelter beds, pop-up shelter sites, and hotel/motel vouchers, to ensure sufficient surge capacity during inclement weather events;

4. Strengthening coordination among implementing partners, including improvements to call center staffing, response times, transportation capacity, and referral processes during Emergency Response Program activations;
5. Establishing clearer and more transparent public messaging regarding shelter and voucher availability during inclement weather activations to reduce confusion and manage expectations for callers seeking assistance; and
6. Developing and implementing short-term and long-term strategies to stabilize funding for the Winter Shelter Program and Emergency Response Program, including options to embed these programs into the County's long-term homelessness funding framework.

WE, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of HSH, in consultation with the Acting Chief Executive Officer and relevant County departments to identify a site and funding recommendation for a dedicated Winter Shelter Program location within Service Planning Area (SPA) 3 in the San Gabriel Valley for the 2026 winter season, including:

1. Identification of potential public or privately owned properties suitable for use as a seasonal or year-round winter shelter site within SPA 3;
2. An analysis of zoning, land use, permitting, legal, and community engagement considerations associated with each potential site;
3. Estimated capital, operational, and staffing costs to establish and operate a Winter Shelter Program site in SPA 3, including identification of funding sources and recommended options to provide sustainable funding; and

4. A recommended site and funding plan, with an associated implementation timeline, to ensure that residents experiencing homelessness in the San Gabriel Valley have local access to winter shelter and emergency storm response services prior to or during the upcoming winter season.

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