

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND
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Revisiting LAHSA’s Structure and Function

In December 1993, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Mayor of the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles City Council created the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) as an independent Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to integrate the City and County responses to homelessness. LAHSA’s creation 27 years ago was intended to coalesce the various approaches towards one central strategic homeless services delivery system.

LAHSA is governed by an appointed, ten-member Commission that convenes monthly. Five members are selected by the Board of Supervisors and five are chosen by the Mayor and City Council. LAHSA’s Commission has the authority to make budgetary, funding, planning and program policy decisions.

Today, LAHSA is the lead agency in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC), which is the regional planning body that coordinates housing and services for homeless families and individuals in Los Angeles County. LAHSA coordinates and manages over \$400 million annually in federal, state, county, and city funds for programs that provide shelter, housing, and services to people experiencing homelessness. The federally designed CoC system designated LAHSA as the lead. However, more recent federal requirements added a separate CoC board for governance, as well as a Coordinated Entry System (CES) Policy Council. Those boards, in addition to other various commissions, advisory boards, County Departments and the County Chief Executive Office (CEO) Homeless Initiative, are all responsible for various policy developments and oversight. These collective entities represent a diffuse system of policy development and accountability that has not been recently evaluated for efficiency.

Furthermore, the humanitarian crisis that currently exists on our streets does not look the same as it did in 1993. Even in the last ten years, homelessness in California has risen almost 23% and in Los Angeles County, the Point-In-Time Count has steadily increased over time. In 2019, almost 60,000 individuals were counted as experiencing homelessness, with almost 75% of the homeless population without shelter. This reflected a 12% increase in individuals experiencing homelessness from just the year prior.

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In addition to the continual increase in scale of the homelessness crisis facing our County, the fundamental approach and amount of resources dedicated to providing homeless services and housing has changed significantly since LAHSA's inception. In 2016, through a collaborative process with community and government partners, the Board of Supervisors approved 47 strategies to prevent and combat homelessness. In March 2017, voters approved Measure H, the quarter-cent increase to the County's sales tax to provide an ongoing revenue stream – an estimated \$355 million per year for ten years — to fund services, rental subsidies and housing. \$244M of Measure H funding flowed through LAHSA in Fiscal Year 19-20 to direct service providers across the County. In Fiscal Year 18-19, \$204M in Measure H funding comprised a large portion of LAHSA's overall budget.

The infusion of resources and efforts to organize services at a new and previously unimaginable scale is seeing mixed results. Homelessness is a complex and dynamic issue that requires frequent pivots and flexibility by policymakers and agencies that implement services and housing programs. While the accomplishments made in the last several years represent an unprecedented level of commitment to combatting this crisis, there is an ongoing need to assess the systems in place to assist the County's most vulnerable. In the same way that the Board reassesses its Measure H Funding Allocations on an annual basis, it is critical that this same level of evaluation is applied to our systems that support the delivery of much-needed services.

There is recognition that the overall homelessness response often creates competing priorities and ambiguous structures for accountability. This lack of clarity can inhibit effective systems-level collaboration, which can ultimately lead to underspending of funds and, thus, underutilization of resources designated for homeless housing and supportive services.

Governance of the homeless delivery system merits review at this critical juncture. On January 14, the Los Angeles City Council introduced a motion to review LAHSA governance structure. Additionally, LAHSA has recently created an Ad Hoc Committee on Governance as well as a Permanent Supportive Housing Central Command to address internal challenges in service delivery. In partnership with these efforts, it is necessary that the County also undertake an analysis of current governance challenges at LAHSA and explore possible enhancements to ensure that our collective efforts are effective as possible in urgently meeting the needs of those experiencing homelessness.

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WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT the Board of Supervisors direct CEO, Auditor-Controller and County Counsel, in consultation with LAHSA and other relevant County Departments to:

1. Report back in 14 days with leadership of LAHSA's Permanent Supportive Housing Central Command, including the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Health Services and the Los Angeles County Development Authority, on necessary corrective actions addressing hurdles to placing individuals in available units to ensure that every unit of permanent housing is filled as quickly as possible; and
2. Conduct an analysis of the current structure and function of LAHSA (in concert with the efforts underway at the City of Los Angeles) and report back to the Board in 60 days with findings and recommendations, including proposed modifications to improve the governance structure, performance, accountability and transparency of LAHSA.

WE, FURTHER, MOVE THAT the Board of Supervisors direct CEO, in conjunction with LAHSA, to provide comprehensive bimonthly public reports beginning on March 17, 2020 to the Board of Supervisors on the work being done by LAHSA, including data on outcomes from its rehousing services system, outreach and prevention efforts as well as progress reports on LAHSA's Ad Hoc Committee on Governance, its work with independent experts on best practices around structure, the Vacancy to Move-In 'Work Plan' (including Permanent Supportive Housing Central Command) and its overall strategic planning efforts.