



MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

April 6, 2023

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Garcia
United States House of Representatives
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nanette Barragán
United States House of Representatives
2312 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: City of Long Beach's Federal Priorities Regarding the Emergency on Homelessness

Dear Senators Feinstein and Padilla, and Representatives Garcia and Barragán:

On behalf of the City of Long Beach, thank you for your leadership and commitment to addressing the challenge of homelessness in our community. The City has dedicated significant resources to address homelessness in Long Beach. In recent years, the City has opened a year-round bridge housing facility with 125 beds; partnered with the County to secure and operate three hotels through California's Project Homekey; purchased a 78-unit hotel and more than 30 modular shelter units; and plans to apply for additional housing opportunities through state programs. The City also implemented three Restorative Engagement to Achieve Collective Health (REACH) teams focused on physical and mental health outreach, increasing the number of outreach and call center service coordination staff from four to 27, while also expanding hours for weekend outreach.

Despite historic investments in prevention, housing, outreach, and other solutions, we have continued to see people fall into homelessness in recent years, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The City's 2022 count found that approximately 3,300 people are experiencing homelessness in Long Beach at any given point in time. In January 2023, the City declared an emergency on homelessness, as have our regional partners, the City and County of Los Angeles, to dedicate additional resources and staffing to this issue.

The City is committed to working with you, Congress, and the Biden Administration to accelerate the transition from homelessness response to advancing long-term solutions through the production and preservation of affordable housing. Our emergency actions are aligned with the Biden Administration's *All In* plan to reduce and prevent homelessness, and we appreciate the federal leadership on this issue and significant investment in housing opportunities. We would like to reiterate the need for additional support in the areas outlined below, to increase the availability of housing through the Housing Choice Voucher program and the HOME Investment Partnership grant.

Additional Resources through the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Long Beach is committed to increasing affordable housing opportunities and resources through direct rental assistance such as housing voucher programs. Yet, rising housing costs, limited supply, and an evolving economic landscape have resulted in a 47.1 percent rate of housing cost burden in the City. In Fiscal Year 2023, the City's Housing Authority received approximately \$103 million in federal funding to provide over 8,000 Section 8 rental assistance vouchers to low-income individuals and families to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing. Furthermore, as part of the City's goals to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness by increasing housing opportunities, the City's Housing Authority conducted outreach to local housing providers to encourage participation in the Emergency Housing Voucher and Housing Choice Voucher programs, significantly increasing the number of vouchers leased in Long Beach. And with 582 emergency housing vouchers awarded to Long Beach through the American Rescue Act, nearly 500 people have found housing at this time.

However, with limited federal resources, the demand for assistance through this vital program greatly outstrips the availability of vouchers. The City has a years-long voucher waiting list, with 16,000 people in the queue for housing subsidies. In addition to the shortage of vouchers compared to the overall housing need in Long Beach, market rents are significantly higher than what a typical voucher will cover, leading to many people with vouchers that are not leased.

In order to address this challenge, **the City requests additional vouchers to meet the growing waiting list, as well as more resources per voucher to ensure that the vouchers remain competitive and are leased in the extremely cost-burdened Los Angeles region market.** We also request that you consider a regulatory amendment to the Housing Choice Voucher guidelines that would allow multiple voucher holders to cover the cost of a single shared unit, which could further alleviate high costs in rent-burdened areas like Los Angeles County. Increasing the funding per voucher will help low-income families, elderly, and people with disabilities afford safe, stable housing. These requests are in alignment with President Biden's goal to fully fund the Section 8 rental housing assistance program and ensure that every eligible family gets the assistance they need so that no one has to pay more than 30 percent of their income for rental housing.

Affordable Housing Development through the HOME Investment Partnerships Program

Over the past several years, Long Beach has supported the development of 530 new interim housing for people experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, one in every two affordable units built in the Gateway Cities region has been built in Long Beach, while our City represents less than one-quarter of the region's population. Between 2014 and 2019, the City facilitated the construction of almost 1,700 new affordable units, preserved nearly 2,000 units, rehabilitated 367 units, and passed the voter-supported Measure A to fund infrastructure improvements. In addition, the City has passed inclusionary zoning and tenant assistance policies and has another 760 affordable units in the development pipeline. The City is also strengthening strategic partnerships with educational institutions to support housing production and add to Long Beach's housing stock for students, families, and teachers and education staff—through the program known as the Long Beach Housing Promise.

The federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program is the primary federal tool helping states and local governments produce affordable rental and owner-occupied housing for low-income families, and we ask that you support more funding for this critical program. These funds help governments leverage additional resources to invest in multi-family, affordable projects. In recent years, for example, Long Beach leveraged

\$3 million in HOME funds to support a 68-home affordable project for seniors, and another \$3.6 million was awarded for the development of an 88-unit affordable development with 20 units reserved for seniors who have experienced homelessness. While President Biden's FY 24 Budget proposal includes \$1.8 billion for the HOME Program, the cost of building housing in California is extremely expensive. **As prices continue to rise in Long Beach and throughout California, dedicating more federal funds through the HOME program will help to accelerate the production of affordable housing.**

Thank you for your help pushing for additional resources to address the homelessness emergency in Long Beach. We look forward to strengthening our partnership. If you have any questions, please contact Tyler Bonanno-Curley, Manager of Government Affairs, at tyler.curley@longbeach.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Richardson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Rex Richardson
City of Long Beach

cc: Marcia L. Fudge, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development
Denis McDonough, Secretary, U.S. Veterans Affairs Dept., and Chair of the USICH
Xavier Becerra, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, and Vice Chair of the USICH
Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President and Director, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
Alan Williams, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, HUD
Nicole Lindler, Senior Advisor for Intergovernmental Affairs, HUD
Jeff Olivet, Executive Director, USICH