

Date: February 10, 2023

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

Subject: **Letter to Los Angeles County regarding the Homelessness Emergency**

Following City Council's approval of an emergency proclamation on homelessness on January 10, 2023, the City of Long Beach (City) has activated the Emergency Operations Center to dedicate staffing and resources to support the emergency. One of the key focus areas of the emergency response is an intergovernmental workgroup responsible for working with Los Angeles County officials and other government partners to ensure the City has the resources and support it needs to address homelessness.

As part of the intergovernmental workgroup's early efforts to engage regional partners, the City has sent the attached letter to Los Angeles County leadership outlining key priorities for partnership. Included in the letter are the following requests:

- Strengthen coordination of emergency resources through direct coordination of emergency response activities and operations.
- Expand affordable housing and shelter through County support of a permanent winter shelter and the redevelopment of Carmelitos.
- Expand mental health resources in Long Beach by increasing local funding and access to residential mental health beds, step-down beds, and board and cares.
- Make distribution of County homeless funding more equitable for Long Beach by addressing longstanding funding gaps in Measure H dollars and services and supporting the City's Project Homekey operations.
- Collocate and streamline services with the City by dedicating County staff at the Multi-Service Center to support people from neighboring jurisdictions.

We have requested follow-up meetings with the County CEO and Chair Janice Hahn to identify ways to strengthen the County's support of our emergency actions. We will continue to provide updates on these requests.

ATTACHMENT

CC: DAWN MCINTOSH, CITY ATTORNEY
DOUGLAS P. HAUBERT, CITY PROSECUTOR
LAURA L. DOUD, CITY AUDITOR
LINDA F. TATUM, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
TERESA CHANDLER, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
KATY NOMURA, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
APRIL WALKER, ADMINISTRATIVE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
KEVIN LEE, CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER
MONIQUE DE LA GARZA, CITY CLERK
DEPARTMENT HEADS



MAYOR **REXRICHARDSON**

January 31, 2023

Ms. Fesia Davenport
Chief Executive Officer
County of Los Angeles
500 W. Temple St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

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

Dear Ms. Davenport,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach, thank you for your leadership and commitment to addressing homelessness throughout Los Angeles County. Homelessness remains the most significant challenge of our time, and alongside the City and County of Los Angeles, Long Beach has also proclaimed an emergency on homelessness. We are committed to working with the County and neighboring jurisdictions to provide the resources needed to house people experiencing homelessness, and we would like to request County support in the key areas outlined below.

Strengthen coordination of emergency resources

The City has dedicated significant resources to address homelessness in Long Beach. We opened our first year-round bridge housing facility with 125 beds, secured three hotels along with the County, and recently purchased a 78-unit hotel and more than 30 modular shelter units. The City also implemented three Restorative Engagement to Achieve Collective Health (REACH) teams, increasing the number of outreach staff and call takers from four to 27, while expanding hours for weekend outreach. Nevertheless, the City continues to have approximately 3,300 people experiencing homelessness—a 77 percent increase since 2017.

Following the County and City’s declarations of emergency on homelessness, it is essential that we coordinate closely on our efforts. The City has set up an incident command structure to bring together the relevant staff and City leadership to expedite actions that will reduce homelessness. We request that the County assign staff from the Homeless Initiative, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Control to participate in our emergency operations, and likewise we ask that the City be able to join the County’s emergency command structure once it is established to ensure strong communication and alignment.

Expand opportunities for affordable housing and shelter in the region

Homelessness is a regional challenge, yet resources for housing and shelter are not equitably distributed throughout the County. While we have supported the development of 530 new interim housing units in Long Beach since 2020, there are only 40 shelter beds located in the City of Bell throughout the remaining Gateway Cities—where nearly 2,300 people experiencing homelessness

562.570.6801 — mayor@longbeach.gov — [@longbeachmayor](https://www.instagram.com/longbeachmayor)
411 W. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, California 90802

remain unsheltered. We request the County allocate resources for shelter space and place shelter units in areas of greatest need in the Gateway Cities, to more equitably distribute resources in the region. The County is uniquely positioned to facilitate better coordination between municipal jurisdictions and incentivize all cities, big and small, to step up and do their part in expanding shelter capacity and helping ameliorate our shared regional homelessness crisis.

Additionally, the Long Beach Winter Shelter at Community Hospital provides shelter, food, safety, and services during the coldest time of the year. The City continues to work diligently to tackle the issue of homelessness. To continue expanding capacity and enhancing service delivery to those most in need, we ask that the County purchase a permanent winter shelter in Long Beach to serve people experiencing homelessness.

Furthermore, despite the economic downturn due to the pandemic, the City has continued to advance housing, permitting more than 1,000 new units in 2021, of which more than half are Accessory Dwelling Units and affordable units. The City also developed inclusionary zoning and tenant assistance policies. We request the County to invest in redeveloping the Carmelitos Public Housing Development to provide more affordable housing opportunities, and we have identified strategic sites that could be strong candidates for affordable housing with County investment through the proposed Land Bank Pilot program. While the program is currently in development, we request that the County prioritize resources for sites in Long Beach. With resources from the Land Bank Pilot program, the City could continue to address the need for a regional approach to providing affordable housing.

Expand mental health resources in Long Beach

Based on the recent point-in-time count, roughly 31 percent of people experiencing homelessness in Long Beach are affected by a chronic health condition, 29 percent are affected by substance abuse, and 37 percent are affected by a serious mental illness. According to the 2022 point-in-time count, the number of people in Long Beach with severe mental illness has more than doubled to 1,200 people and those with a substance use disorder has increased by 70 percent to 950 people. Despite the overwhelming need for behavioral health resources, however, the County currently only has a few mental health residential beds available in Long Beach. We ask that the County increase resources and access to residential mental health beds, step-down beds, and board and cares.

In 2021, the City also began the process to localize mental health resources. Half of those experiencing homelessness in Long Beach need mental health support, and the trauma of experiencing homelessness can contribute to or exacerbate mental health conditions. Currently, the administration and location of mental health and substance use services falls under the County, rather than the City's Health Department, creating a disconnected system of care for those needing mental health services. We ask that the County support localizing the delivery of mental health services in the City through increased funding for mental health providers, the expansion of wellness facilities, and the development of more recuperative care and step-down beds.

Make distribution of County homeless funding more equitable for Long Beach

The City currently receives an estimated \$13.7 million in direct allocations and services that the

County provides through Measure H, including family support, youth services, permanent supportive housing, and other operational resources. Based on the City's point-in-time count, however, Long Beach should be getting nearly 5% of the County's Measure H dollars and services, or a total of more than \$25 million. There is a gap of nearly *\$12 million* in Measure H resources that Long Beach is not receiving to prevent and address homelessness. We request that the County do an assessment of current allocations and services in Long Beach and adjust its distribution of Measure H funding to more equitably focus on areas of greatest need in Long Beach. The City will also advocate for more equitable state funding to Long Beach and the region through the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program, and we would like to have the County's support in this advocacy effort.

In addition, the City is thankful for the County's collaboration with Project Homekey and other programs. We would like to continue partnering with the County to identify ongoing operational resources for Project Homekey sites in Long Beach. We also request Measure H funding to support safe parking sites in Long Beach and additional resources to purchase modular housing to be utilized in the long-term for permanent supportive housing.

Collocate and streamline services between the City and County

Another opportunity for the City and County to work together on the emergency is to bolster access to services. Daily visits to our Multi-Service Center have gone up by nearly 100 percent since 2020, and based on homeless count data, nearly half of individuals come from outside the City to seek services in Long Beach. With limited City resources, it is vital that the County provide a direct referral to their systems and transportation to services. We request that the County collocate resources at the Multi-Service Center to support people coming in from outside of Long Beach, in order to help them access the appropriate County resources.

Thank you for your leadership on this important matter. We look forward to strengthening our partnership to identify solutions to homelessness in the region and will follow up with a formal meeting request. If you have any questions, please contact Tyler Bonanno-Curley, Manager of Government, at tyler.curley@longbeach.gov.

Sincerely,



Mayor Rex Richardson
City of Long Beach

cc: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager, City of Long Beach
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Dr. Lisa H. Wong, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Stephen Simon, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
Cheri Todoroff, Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative
Dr. Gary Tsai, Los Angeles County Substance Abuse Prevention and Control