



Supervisor Kelly Long, Chair
Ventura County

Supervisor Susan Ellenberg, Vice-Chair
Santa Clara County

February 21, 2020

The Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Governor's 2020-21 Budget Proposal: Homelessness

Dear Senator Mitchell:

On behalf of the Urban Counties of California (UCC), I write to express our appreciation and support for the Governor's proposed additional investment of state funds to address the state's severe homelessness crisis. Urban counties are central to the fight to reduce homelessness and are committed to working with the Legislature and Administration to develop and implement a coordinated strategy of prevention and intervention to effectively deliver near- and long-term results.

The Governor's proposal for \$750 million in state funding is key to continue efforts across the state to respond to the homelessness crisis, including the lack of affordable housing crisis. Urban counties are constantly seeking new partnerships, improving intervention efforts, and innovating solutions to address the unique needs of their communities. These efforts require considerable resources, both human and financial, and while the state and counties have dedicated significant resources to emergency shelters, navigation centers, and outreach care to homeless individuals, there is no doubt that additional state funds are needed for local agencies to manage the crisis.

While we appreciate the proposed investment of state resources directed toward mitigating the homeless crisis, urban counties urge you to consider utilizing the state administrative structure provided in the Homeless Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP) and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program instead of the new structure proposed by the Administration. While we do not question the capacity of the Department of Social Services as the administrative entity, we are concerned about the concept of a regional coordinator, as we fear it may further complicate local homelessness efforts, adding cost, time, and potential duplication to delivery of services. In the experience of urban counties, the two previous years of funding have incentivized and facilitated local collaboration; in some instances, local entities have doubled down to overcome challenges and achieve collaboration in often difficult circumstances. We believe that, with more time, collaborative

The Voice of Urban Counties

Alameda ✕ Contra Costa ✕ Fresno ✕ Los Angeles ✕ Orange ✕ Riverside ✕ Sacramento ✕ San Bernardino ✕ San Diego
San Francisco ✕ San Joaquin ✕ San Mateo ✕ Santa Clara ✕ Ventura

efforts will continue to improve and effectuate results for communities. For these reasons, UCC urges the Legislature to direct new homelessness investments to a mechanism already in place.

Those experiencing homeless on the streets and in shelters clearly require significant services to address underlying issues that have resulted in their homelessness. Social services, behavioral health interventions, and income supports are critical to ensure that interventions are successful in mitigating the circumstances that have resulted in a person's lack of shelter. Of course, existing resources are simply not enough to address the challenges urban counties see in their communities. To that end, we appreciate the focus on financial stabilization of board-and-care facilities, as well as additional investment in behavioral health infrastructure and workforce, which are critical to our efforts to mitigate the homeless crisis. For urban counties, this also means ensuring that funds from the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) are maintained at the county level, where county behavioral health continues to direct funds to their most effective use.

Increasing the supply of housing at all income levels, and in particular low- and extremely low-income housing, is another key toward ending the homeless crisis. Urban counties are prepared to engage in fiscal and policy discussions to increase the supply of housing for at-risk populations, as individuals experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness must have a place to call home if we are to effectively address this crisis.

Finally, we assert that our homeless crisis is the direct result of an economy in which wages fail to keep up with the price of housing for low-income individuals. As a result, our efforts should rightfully be focused on keeping individuals housed. Rental subsidies, income supports, and a robust effort to ensure that individuals are receiving assistance through social services programs for which they are eligible are necessary to prevent individuals from becoming homeless. Extraordinary work focused on seniors, veterans, families, and youth are critical to ensure that these vulnerable populations are kept from becoming homeless. We support any and all financial support to ensure that early interventions are available for those on the brink of becoming homeless.

We greatly appreciate the work of the Administration and the Legislature to provide meaningful financial support and assistance to address our homeless crisis and remain committed to working collaboratively with you, our colleagues locally, and other stakeholders to develop effective and humane solutions to homelessness. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions about our position.

Sincerely,



Jean Kinney Hurst
Legislative Advocate

cc: Members and Consultants, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee