



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

September 26, 2019

Dear Regional Homeless Advisory Council Members,

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a member of my Council of Regional Homeless Advisors. I know we all feel the exigency and urgency to help the tens of thousands across our state who have no place to sleep at night or live during the day. We also feel the strain an increasing population of homeless people living on our streets places on communities concerned about the well-being of all of their residents.

This national crisis requires bold ideas and bold action. Already, a number of provocative ideas have been put forward. Today, though, I write to urge action. The Council must identify public policy changes and best practices for local communities to spend the major infusion of state dollars to address the problem of street homelessness by providing immediate emergency shelter and services. This should be the focus of the task force over the next three months.

Let me be clear: homelessness in our state is an emergency that demands immediate action, not just words. Our response to homelessness must begin with historical context – we first have to acknowledge that for decades, it has been tacitly acceptable for people to sleep on the streets. As a matter of public health and public safety, this needs to change. We must do more so homeless Californians have access to a safe place to sleep – permanent housing when possible, or navigation centers and emergency beds when necessary. And while our compassion dictates that we not approach homelessness as primarily a criminal matter, our local communities must fully enforce public safety and public health laws to protect both our homeless populations and our broader communities.

Ending street homelessness will require concerted effort by state and local government, as well as by the private sector. The existing State resources are unprecedented – this year's budget doubled down on the state's traditional role in addressing homelessness: funding safety net programs upon which people depend. We increased CalWorks grants by 28 percent, increased state

funding for child welfare, mental health, and other social service programs by hundreds of millions of dollars annually. We permanently eliminated the SSI cash-out providing more support for seniors and people with disabilities. The Whole Person Care initiative – coordinating health, behavioral health and social services in patient-centered care – was extended and expanded.

And we also helped people living on the edge of losing their apartments and homes by stopping rent price gouging and investing over \$1 billion to expand the Earned Income Tax and put money directly into the pockets of the working poor.

In addition, the State provided local governments with unprecedented levels of new funding to address this crisis, specifically \$650 million in new emergency aid direct to cities, counties, and Continuums of Care.

And, as of today, I have signed major pieces of legislation to address local needs in removing regulatory barriers to solve homelessness: from providing a CEQA exemption for supportive housing and shelters in the City of Los Angeles, to giving Alameda County, Orange County, all of the cities within those counties, and the City of San Jose with the authorization to declare a shelter crisis, which permits the suspension of state health, planning and zoning, and safety standards, we are providing the tools you need.

I am confident that with these major state investments and removal of regulatory barriers, communities have necessary tools to act. Our communities now need bold vision, leadership and action.

I ask you to spend your remaining meetings focusing on developing concrete short-term actions and longer-term recommendations for the state to partner with local communities and the private sector to: 1) end street homelessness, 2) break down barriers to building more housing, and 3) get more people into treatment. These three challenges demand our collective focus as the Council proceeds in its work.

Thank you again for dedicating your efforts to solving this crisis. I look forward to continued engagement as we press forward with action.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom
Governor of California