



Office of the Mayor

CONSENT CALENDAR

February 19, 2019

To: Honorable Members of the City Council  
 From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín, Councilmembers Sophie Hahn, Cheryl Davila and Kate Harrison  
 Subject: Declaring a California Homelessness State of Emergency

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution requesting that Governor Newsom declare a California Homelessness State of Emergency, and direct more resources to State Departments (e.g. Caltrans). Send a copy of the Resolution to Governor Newsom, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, State Senator Nancy Skinner, State Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, State Superintendent of Public Education Tony Thurmond and Caltrans District Director Tony Tavares.

BACKGROUND

Like many cities in California, Berkeley is facing a crisis, with homelessness rising by 17% between 2015 and 2017. Currently, approximately 1000 individuals experience homelessness every day, with almost 70% (664) unsheltered.<sup>1</sup>

While homelessness has long been a challenge, increases in the scope and duration of homelessness have provided a new sense of urgency. In 2016, Berkeley declared a Homeless Shelter Crisis (Resolution No. 67,357-N.S.), which allowed the City to explore a wide variety of response options to address the crisis, and to remove obstacles to their implementation. This declaration was extended to January 19, 2018, and again to January 19, 2020.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the City has taken steps to quickly strengthen existing programs, services and facilities, while developing new ones. Berkeley voters also passed ballot measures in 2018 that will provide \$135M for affordable housing and approximately \$6M in resources annually to support homeless resources.

Despite continued efforts to address this crisis, resources continue to fall short of needs. Even with the addition of resources allocated through Governor Newsom's 2019 Budget and from Alameda County, Berkeley is not able to shelter all who are living on our streets from night to night, or meet the complex and costly challenges of providing health and mental health services, job training, housing counselling and other services. As a result, encampments continue to proliferate and grow creating a health crisis for those residing there and for the community at large.

Homelessness is not unique to Berkeley; it is a regional and statewide crisis that knows few jurisdictional boundaries. Cities and counties across California are also struggling to meet the

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City\\_Council/2017/07\\_Jul/Documents/2017-07-25\\_Item\\_53\\_2017\\_Berkeley\\_Homeless.aspx](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2017/07_Jul/Documents/2017-07-25_Item_53_2017_Berkeley_Homeless.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City\\_Council/2017/10\\_Oct/Documents/2017-10-31\\_Item\\_10\\_Extension\\_of\\_Housing\\_Crisis\\_-\\_Rev\\_2.aspx](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2017/10_Oct/Documents/2017-10-31_Item_10_Extension_of_Housing_Crisis_-_Rev_2.aspx)

housing and service needs of homeless individuals. In 2017, homelessness rose nearly 14% in California<sup>3</sup> and by only 1% nationally.<sup>4</sup> California also accounts for a disproportionate share of the nation's homeless, with 12% of the total US population and 22% of the homeless. Also, a much higher rate of California's homeless are unsheltered; 68% compared to a national average of 24%.<sup>5</sup>

A May 12, 2018 San Francisco Chronicle Opinion piece<sup>6</sup> entitled, "The Bay Area's Housing Crisis Has Become an Emergency," clearly identifies our State's predicament as an *emergency*. It calls attention to California's crisis of homelessness, reporting that fewer and fewer low-income Californians are able to afford the basic cost of living, and asserting that efforts to provide housing for lower-income residents cannot succeed without state support.

California is facing an emergency unprecedented in scope and impact. Cities and counties cannot address this crisis without emergency resources and support from the State, in all of its departments. Section 8558 of Title 2, Division 1, Chapter 7 of the California Government Code, defines a State of Emergency as:

*"the duly proclaimed existence of conditions of ... extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the state caused by ... conditions ... which, by reason of their magnitude, are or are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of any single county, city and county, or city and require the combined forces of a mutual aid region or regions to combat"*<sup>7</sup>

The homeless crisis is creating a statewide health and safety crisis. Conditions have reached a magnitude such that they are beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment and facilities available within our city and county governments and school districts. Our public right-of-ways, highway over and underpasses, railway lines and other lands are burgeoning with homeless. These encampment communities are outside of local control and must be serviced with sanitary facilities and waste removal.

For these reasons, we must call upon Governor Newsom to declare a Homelessness State of Emergency and to make additional State resources available to address the crisis of homelessness, especially in the encampments that occupy State controlled properties.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no environmental opportunities or risks associated with this recommendation.

#### CONTACT PERSON

Mayor Jesse Arreguin, (510) 981-7100

#### ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution

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3 <https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/editorials/article/Editorial-The-Bay-Area-s-housing-crisis-has-12908782.php?t=b56c5082c0>

4 <http://www.vhcorp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-Homeless-Count-Results.pdf>

5 [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/96506/final\\_report\\_and\\_recommendations\\_on\\_homelessness\\_in\\_alameda\\_county\\_california\\_0.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/96506/final_report_and_recommendations_on_homelessness_in_alameda_county_california_0.pdf)

6 <https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/editorials/article/Editorial-The-Bay-Area-s-housing-crisis-has-12908782.php?t=b56c5082c0>

7 [http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=8558](http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=8558)

RESOLUTION NO. ##, ###-N.S.  
CALLING ON GOVERNOR NEWSOM TO DECLARE A CALIFORNIA HOMELESSNESS STATE  
OF EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, Berkeley is facing an emergency, with homelessness rising by 17% between 2015 and 2017; and

WHEREAS, approximately 1000 individuals experience homelessness every day in Berkeley, with almost 70% unsheltered, many living in encampments; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Point In Time Homeless Count results are pending and the expectation is that the number of people homeless will increase; and

WHEREAS, increases in the scope and duration of homelessness in Berkeley, and throughout the State of California, have provided a new sense of urgency to address the crisis; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, Berkeley declared a Homeless Shelter Crisis (Res. No. 67,357-N.S.), which allowed the City to explore a wide variety of response options to address the crisis, and to remove obstacles to their implementation, recently extending the crisis until January 19th, 2020 (Res. No. 68,206-N.S.); and

WHEREAS, the State of California required jurisdictions to declare a Homeless Shelter Crisis in order to access HEAP funding; and

WHEREAS, even with the addition of new State of California and Alameda County resources, Berkeley is unable to shelter all of its homeless residents, or to meet the complex and costly challenges of providing affordable housing, health and mental health services, job training, housing counselling and other desperately needed services to those in need; and

WHEREAS, homelessness is a regional and statewide crisis that not one city, county, or school district is able to solve on its own, and jurisdictions across the State are struggling to meet the housing and service needs of the homeless; and

WHEREAS, encampment communities are proliferating in our public right-of-ways, highway over and underpasses, railway lines and other lands homelessness; and

WHEREAS, cities and counties cannot address the homeless crisis without emergency funding and support from the State and all of its departments (e.g. Caltrans) in order to mitigate the rising health and safety issues that arise from people living on our streets and in encampments.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley does hereby call upon Governor Gavin Newsom to exercise his executive power to declare a California Homelessness State of Emergency, and to direct resources and State Departments to support the State's overwhelmed cities and counties.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk shall transmit copies of this resolution to Governor Gavin Newsom, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, State Senator Nancy Skinner, State Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, State Superintendent of Public Education Tony Thurmond, and Caltrans District Director Tony Tavares.

