



Office of the Mayor

CONSENT CALENDAR
February 11, 2020

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín, Vice-Mayor Sophie Hahn, and Councilmembers Ben Bartlett and Kate Harrison

Subject: Support of HR 5609 - Homelessness Emergency Declaration Act

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution supporting House Resolution (HR) 5609, the Homelessness Emergency Declaration Act. Send a copy of the Resolution to Representatives Josh Harder and Barbara Lee, Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, and President Trump.

BACKGROUND

Homelessness has increased across the nation with a significant proportion of this population unsheltered. Berkeley has seen a 14% increase in homelessness between 2017 and 2019. Alameda County saw a 43% increase during the same timeframe, while California saw a 16% increase between 2018 and 2019. Within California's homeless population 69% are unsheltered, including 79% in Alameda County and 73% in Berkeley.

Homelessness presents a multitude of problems and impacts many. It is estimated that homelessness can lead to a life expectancy that is 36 years lower than the national average. A survey of homeless individuals conducted by the University of California, San Francisco found that despite the group having a median age of 58, their health symptoms were typical of people in their 70-90s. In Berkeley, 42% of respondents in the 2019 point-in-time count reported having a psychiatric emotional condition and 41% reported having at least one disabling condition. Many people do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities, further perpetuating the risk of negative health and environmental impacts.

President Donald Trump has frequently raised the issue of homelessness, especially in California. Over the past three months, the President has made fourteen tweets relating to homelessness, with thirteen of them explicitly mentioning California or San Francisco. The President has stated that if governors ask for help from the federal government, he will provide the resources needed to address homelessness.

House Resolution (HR) 5609, introduced by U.S. Representative Josh Harder, allows Governors to request a federal emergency declaration in order to obtain federal resources, similar to the process for declaring an emergency after natural disasters.

Specifically, such a declaration would allow federal agencies to provide resources to state and local agencies relating to housing, food, transportation, mental health, and job training.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Not applicable.

CONTACT PERSON

Mayor Jesse Arreguín 510-981-7100

Attachments:

- 1: Resolution
- 2: Text of HR 5609

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

IN SUPPORT OF HR 5609 – THE HOMELESS EMERGENCY DECLARATION ACT

WHEREAS, rates of homelessness have increased across the nation over the past few years, including a 14% increase in Berkeley and 43% increase in Alameda County between 2017-2019 and a 16% increase in California between 2018-2019; and

WHEREAS, 69% of California's homeless population is unsheltered, including 79% in Alameda County and 73% in Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, people experiencing homelessness can see a life expectancy that is 36 years shorter than the national average; and

WHEREAS, mental health and disability is prevalent among those experiencing homelessness, with 42% of Berkeley's homeless population reporting having a mental health issue and 41% a disabling condition, according to the 2019 point-in-time count; and

WHEREAS, many people do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities, further perpetuating the risk of negative health and environmental impacts; and

WHEREAS, the issue of homelessness has become a national issue, with President Donald Trump having tweeted 14 times about homelessness between October 2019 and January 2020, with 13 of those tweets explicitly mentioning California or San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, the President has stated that he will be willing to provide federal assistance if governors ask the federal government for help; and

WHEREAS, House Resolution (HR) 5609, the Homeless Emergency Declaration Act, introduced by U.S. Representative Josh Harder, allows Governors to request a federal emergency declaration in order to obtain federal resources, similar to the process for declaring an emergency after natural disasters; and

WHEREAS, the bill would allow federal agencies to provide resources to state and local agencies relating to housing, food, transportation, mental health, and job training.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that it hereby supports HR 5609, the Homeless Emergency Declaration Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be sent to Representatives Josh Harder and Barbara Lee, Senators Diane Feinstein and Kamala Harris, and President Donald Trump.

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5609

To authorize the President to declare a homelessness emergency, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 15, 2020

Mr. HARDER of California introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Budget, and in addition to the Committees on Financial Services, and Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To authorize the President to declare a homelessness emergency, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Homelessness Emer-
5 gency Declaration Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Homelessness in the Central Valley and
2 across the country is a threat to public health and
3 safety.

4 (2) One-third of people in the United States ex-
5 perience homelessness are families with children.

6 (3) 1.2 million children under age 6 experience
7 homelessness.

8 (4) Sixty-nine percent of California's homeless
9 population is unsheltered.

10 (5) There are 12,396 homeless children and
11 11,000 homeless veterans in California.

12 (6) One in 5 California Community College stu-
13 dents is homeless.

14 (7) The rate of increase in homelessness is
15 cause for national concern and action.

16 (8) Incidences of homelessness grew 14 percent
17 in California between 2014 and 2018.

18 (9) On a given day, 40,000 U.S. military vet-
19 erans experience some form of homelessness.

20 (10) The experience of homelessness is dam-
21 aging to a child's mental health and development, as
22 evidenced by the fact that 40 percent of homeless
23 children experience mental health challenges.

24 (11) Homelessness is a deadly condition, de-
25 creasing life expectancy by up to 36 years.

1 **SEC. 3. ASSISTANCE FOR HOMELESSNESS EMERGENCY**
2 **DECLARATION.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Upon the request of a Governor,
4 or other appropriate agency, of a State under subsection
5 (b), the President may declare a homelessness emergency.

6 (b) REQUEST FROM GOVERNOR.—The Governor, or
7 other appropriate agency, of a State that is or will be af-
8 fected by a significant number of or increase in the num-
9 ber of homeless individuals may request a declaration
10 under subsection (a).

11 (c) ASSISTANCE.—If the President declares a home-
12 lessness emergency under subsection (a), the President,
13 acting through the Federal Emergency Management
14 Agency and other appropriate Federal agencies, may pro-
15 vide homelessness emergency assistance, including housing
16 vouchers and increases in fair market rents under section
17 8 of the United States Housing Assistance Act of 1937
18 (42 U.S.C. 1437f), to States and local communities that
19 are or will be affected by the homelessness emergency, in-
20 cluding resources for establishing temporary or permanent
21 homeless shelters, emergency food assistance, transpor-
22 tation, access to physical and behavioral healthcare, and
23 access to Federal employment and job training programs.

24 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
25 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be
26 necessary to carry out this Act.

1 **SEC. 4. BUDGET ADJUSTMENT FOR HOMELESS EMER-**
2 **GENCY ASSISTANCE.**

3 Section 251(b)(2) of the Balanced Budget and Emer-
4 gency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)(2))
5 is amended by adding at the end the following:

6 “(H) HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSIST-
7 ANCE.—

8 “(i) If, for any fiscal year, appropria-
9 tions for discretionary accounts are en-
10 acted that Congress designates as being
11 for homelessness emergency assistance in
12 statute, the adjustment for a fiscal year
13 shall be the total of such appropriations
14 for the fiscal year in discretionary accounts
15 designated as being for homelessness emer-
16 gency assistance.

17 “(ii) For purposes of this subpara-
18 graph, the term ‘homelessness emergency
19 assistance’ means assistance provided
20 under a determination under section 2 of
21 the Homelessness Emergency Declaration
22 Act.

23 “(iii) Appropriations considered home-
24 lessness emergency assistance under this
25 subparagraph in a fiscal year shall not be

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1 eligible for adjustments under subpara-
2 graph (A) for the fiscal year.”.

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