

ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS COMMISSION
ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS CONSUMER/COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

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To: Alameda County Homeless Council and Alameda County Board of Supervisors:
From: Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Commission and Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Consumer/Community Advisory Board
RE: Homeless Encampment Health Leadership

October 15, 2018

Honorable Alameda County Supervisors and Department leads:

We send you this letter as colleagues governing Alameda County's \$16M [Health Care for the Homeless](#) health center program. We join you in common struggle -- in roles as health providers, community partners, and advocates -- to end homelessness and improve the health of people experiencing homelessness. We are encouraged by and paying attention to recent actions by the County of Alameda to prioritize solutions to the growing crisis of street homelessness.

The presence of thousands of fellow humans living on our streets without adequate hygiene, health and safety supports puts everyone at risk. All county residents are impacted.

Local government exists to provide for the safety, health and well-being of all residents -- housed or otherwise. **We urge the County of Alameda to take stronger, more visible and direct leadership role in creating consistent appropriate responses to this disaster.**

Our County is uniquely positioned to take these four critical steps:

1. Establish countywide standards and guidelines for homeless encampments.

The County must create, support and enforce health and safety standards to protect both housed and unhoused community affected by street homelessness -- guiding when and how camps may be moved or shut down, health and safety standards for existing encampments, services are to be provided, and the continuum of resources from streets to camps to shelters to permanent housing. Clear procedures, [principles](#) and roles will balance public health and safety with the dignity and human rights of unhoused residents.

2. Require and facilitate countywide multi-jurisdictional coordination and provision of essential health, hygiene and safety services.

Throughout Alameda County, local cities and other entities must coordinate and collaborate in a meaningful way to ensure for the provision of street and encampment health care services to protect housed and unhoused residents. The County must take a lead role in assuring this.

The list below includes essential services corresponding to County and city departments. Under the direction of the County, these departments can effectively collaborate to ensure the ongoing provision of the essential health, hygiene and safety services to homeless encampments:

- Medical and behavioral health care services
- Case management & other support services
- Hygienic restrooms
- Potable water and washing/shower facilities

- Food storage & preparation safety
- Harm reduction and overdose prevention
- Access to safe storage for possessions and property
- Trash removal
- Environmental vermin/vector control
- Personal security and safety
- Care for pets and/or companion animals
- Biohazard/hazardous waste removal
- Governance, health standards and community relations
- Fire safety services and supplies

3. Use a Countywide Emergency/Crisis approach to enable creative, local, community-involved responses to the crisis of street homelessness.

This is an emergency – [State law AB932](#) allows codes and zoning requirements to be waived, and the County should take a lead role in removing roadblocks. We must work to encourage and enable innovative partners -- faith, community groups, businesses and others – to put their will and ideas to work.

4. Dedicate an ongoing stream of funding to specifically address the health and hygiene impacts of street homelessness.

The \$1.9M in 2017 County funds allocated to local jurisdictions is a step in the right direction, but this needs to be expanded and sustained, and focused directly on the immediate health, hygiene and safety needs of communities affected by the crisis of street homelessness.

There are many examples, from [Seattle King County](#) implemented the first two recommendations, to the vibrant local community responses shown by our [Interfaith Council of Alameda County](#), the State of Emergency being used in Santa Clara to create [Bridge Communities](#), the countywide [Hepatitis A collaboration](#) vaccinating hundreds of homeless persons, as well as the weekly encampment coordination meetings between City of Oakland and Alameda County, and local efforts in the unincorporated County.

As County leaders, you must take strong leadership. But you cannot solve the problem alone: Include us, your colleagues, service providers, people experiencing homelessness, health centers, housing providers, faith community, and activists. Continue to ask us for ideas, support and involvement. It will only be through dedicated partnership that we will resolve the crisis of street homelessness.

Sincerely,

Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Commission



boona cheema, chair HCH Commission

Lynette Lee
Fr. Rigo Caloca-Rivas
Michelle Schneiderman MD
Laura Sanchez
Lois Bailey Lindsey
Claudia Young
Samuel Weeks DDS

**Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless
Consumer/Community Advisory Board**



Samuel Weeks DDS, HCH Commissioner, Chair
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