
Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Program
Consumer/Community Advisory Board (CCAB)
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July 14, 2017

Dear:

Alameda County Board of Supervisors
City of Berkeley Mayor and Council City of Oakland Mayor and Council
Alameda County Health Care Services Agency
City of Hayward Mayor and Council
Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Commission

We are the membership of the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Consumer/Community Advisory Board (HCH CCAB). We are members of a community affected by homelessness. Most of us have experienced homelessness, have lived on the streets and encampments. We work to guide the services of the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Program, and we work to help other homeless people get off the streets, to get health care and housing. Through our lives, work, education and experience, we have a lot to contribute to improving the health and lives of people experiencing homelessness.

Our county and cities are experiencing a housing crisis – this is an emergency that affects all of us. The increasing numbers of people forced to live on the streets are causing the following consequences that affect all of us:

- **Human Suffering:**
Our brothers and sisters who are unsheltered -- living on the streets -- are getting sicker and they are dying. It is inhuman to watch as they suffer from disease and neglect. We know from experience how the struggle for day-to-day survival causes physical and spiritual pain making one sicker. Unsheltered people work to try to create healthier, safer spaces by joining together in encampments, but these are often neglected, only attracting police, trash-dumpers, and people coming to prey on the homeless.
- **Public Health:**
The presence of thousands of persons living on the streets contributes to the spread of physical and spiritual illness throughout our communities. Unsupported encampments are treated as dumping grounds, eyesores to be shut down, with nowhere for residents to go except back to the streets or to jail. The presence of unsheltered people on the streets impacts businesses, health and quality of life. A clean, well-supported encampment can contribute positively to the community where it exists.
- **Costs of Ignoring the Unsheltered:**
Each preventable death, each preventable ER visit, each poorly funded intervention, each person who is ignored or kicked to the streets, is a missed opportunity to better our community. To ignore or underfund appropriate solutions is to waste resources and money while the problem grows.

Have you enrolled as a member of the National Consumer Advocacy Board (NCAB) yet?

it's free and you can do it at:

www.nhchc.org/resources/consumer/

This is a crisis, a health and housing emergency. We urge you to take immediate, emergency action to address this crisis. We demand humane, principled, effective leadership from our elected officials and government staff.

As lawmakers and leaders, you can declare a Shelter Crisis under California state law (AB 2176) to support speedy and effective steps to reduce human suffering and health impacts. This means coordinating and collaborating with homeless people, neighbors, businesses and groups to provide needed services like hygiene, trash, safety, and health outreach to encampments, developing interim and bridge shelter, parking and housing projects, and continuing to work to developing truly affordable, safe housing for all.

In developing a plan to address this crisis, we, as persons who have formerly experienced street homelessness, want to share the following wisdom with you:

1. **Listen and learn** from the people who are directly affected by this crisis -- the people themselves who live on the streets and encampments.
2. **Listen to us:** HCH CCAB members have created some very useful documents which can guide you in your planning – HCH CCAB Encampment Discussion Recommendations and Discussion Paper, the All-In Listening Sessions poster on Unsheltered Homeless, and a letter written by Ronald Anderson of St. Mary’s Center, all of which are attached.
3. **Work with your allies:** Many neighbor groups, homeless people, churches, some businesses and groups are willing to step forward and volunteer effort, time, money and resources to help their brothers and sisters. You can’t solve problems by yourselves. Support and encourage new relationships and partnerships and you will be surprised at the results.

There are benefits of carrying out a thoughtful work plan to address the shelter crisis. You will develop solutions that actually work. Voters and neighbors will support these approaches. People will see the city and County actually doing their job: Improving lives. We can develop more ways for community members to lend their support. Neglecting the devastation and the opportunities to address the suffering will result in a high cost to all of us.

Our HCH CCAB is available and willing to lend our expertise to being a part of a solution to the shelter crisis, in a variety of ways. Please feel free to contact us for more information and involvement, at info@achch.org.

Signed,

Membership of the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Program Consumer/Community Advisory Board

Dabrina Fuentes *Samuel A. Kuba P.D.S.*
Brenda Whitfield *Ronald "Guitar" Whitfield*
Bennie Whitfield *Kimberly Barks*
[Signature] *April Anthony*
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Attached:

- HCH CCAB Encampment Discussion Paper
- HCH CCAB All-In Listening Session Poster
- Letter written by Ronald Anderson, St. Mary’s Center.

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