

Communication from Public

Name:

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Council File No: 20-0045

Comments for Public Posting: Letter attached



June 17, 2021

Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chair
Homelessness & Poverty Committee
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Council File 20-0045

Dear Councilmember Ridley-Thomas,

CCA is a membership organization comprised of over 300 members including large employers, developers, small businesses and non-profit organizations. Our broad coalition is committed to advancing comprehensive solutions to homelessness, and **we strongly support modernizing LAHSA's governance to increase accountability and efficacy.**

CCA has been engaged in the Committee's efforts to analyze the four reports developed in response to improving the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA) Governance. We offer the following recommendations for improving LAHSA's governance in a phased manner. We also recommend actions that are outside the scope of LAHSA governance but are structural in nature. We are not commenting on operations and programs such as outreach, although they are very important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-term (Completed by end of 2021)

As the City, County and electorate have dedicated more resources to homelessness the role of the LAHSA Commission (the Commission) has become more important and visible. The first step towards better governance is reforming the composition of the Commission by requiring at least one elected official from the City and one from the County to serve on the Commission. The City representative should be the Councilmember who chairs the Homelessness and Poverty Committee and, or, should the committee dissolve, the Councilmember whose district has the greatest population of people experiencing homelessness. The County appointment should be the Supervisor whose district has the greatest population of people experiencing homelessness **(REC #1)**. We also believe there should be a requirement to have at least one Commissioner with lived experience **(REC #2)**.

Consideration should also be given to placing representatives from the Chief Executive Office - Homeless Initiative, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Mental Health and Department of Public Health on the Commission **(REC #3)**. These departments have significant roles in addressing homelessness and its contributing factors. Placement on the Commission may increase coordination with the goal of prevention.

If these departments are not placed on the Commission, consideration should be given to executing Memorandums of Understanding with each department and the Commission to define the relationship and establish formal roles and communications **(REC #4)**. The City and County should amend the current

Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to execute these changes within the next 90 days, the Council should designate the Chief Legislative Analyst to lead this work and request bi-weekly status reports **(REC #5)**.

Updating the current LAHSA Commission composition is one important step in this process and should be done; however, it should not be the only or final action taken. The City has important decisions to make about forming its own Public Health Department and possibly Continuum of Care **(REC #6)**. We know there is additional work underway to inform these decisions and recommend that those discussions begin in earnest at your Committee.

Mid-term (Completed by mid-2022)

The Committee for Greater LA commissioned a report from the Pat Brown Institute to review LAHSA governance and provide recommendations. The illuminating report indicated that while improving LAHSA's governance was important, this change alone would not improve services for people experiencing homelessness. The report recommended the establishment of a new independent organization currently referred to as The Center.

As outlined in the report, The Center would seek to fill significant gaps in our response to homelessness including creating a shared vision with established outcomes between the City and County. The Center can set our north star goal of housing all unsheltered people and creating a collective responsibility. This shared sense of responsibility will help unite the otherwise distinct authorities of the County and the City. We believe the City should endorse The Center concept with the provision that it remains a private nonprofit organization that does not require any legislative action to be initiated **(REC #7)**. We believe it is important for The Center to retain its independence. Developing The Center as a private nonprofit organization will still pose challenges, including its operationalization. The City should support the Committee's efforts and invite more of this kind of public-private cooperation to address our biggest challenges.

In addition to the Homelessness and Poverty Committee, the Committee for Greater LA and eventually The Center, would be ideal places to analyze proposals for a City Public Health Department and Continuum of Care. We recommend that these entities be involved to the highest extent possible in these decisions **(REC #8)**.

Long-term (Completed by end of 2022)

Long Beach, Pasadena and Glendale each have their own Public Health Department and Continuum of Care. Additional research is needed to determine if this would be beneficial for the City. United Way is studying this topic and a report is expected to be completed this year.

There has been considerable debate over whether the City is getting its fair share of Measure H, public health including mental health and substance abuse resources. We recommend that the City Council request the City Controller to conduct an audit of LA County Departments of Public and Mental Health to determine what percentage of City of LA residents are being served and to better understand how accessible these resources are **(REC #9)**.



Preventing homelessness is hard work that requires unwavering commitment and dedicated resources. To that end, we recommend that the City Council consider supporting Senate Bill 679 to establish a Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency (**REC #10**). If created, this agency could create new affordable housing units and rental subsidies across LA County in a manner that does not exist now and would complement the current work of the City's Housing and Community Investment Department and the County's Development Authority.

CCA supports this effort to modernize LAHSA and to improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, and we thank you for your commitment to advancing solutions. We hope this letter helps establish a timeline and action items that will lead to better governance. We greatly appreciate your consideration and value our continued partnership to build a stronger and more inclusive LA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Lall", is positioned above the printed name.

Jessica Lall
President & CEO
Central City Association of Los Angeles

cc: LA City Council President Nury Martinez
Honorable Members of the LA City Council

Summary of Recommendations

1. Appoint elected officials from LA County and LA City to LAHSA Commission.
2. Appoint a person with lived experience to LAHSA Commission.
3. Consider appointing key LA County departments to LAHSA Commission.
4. Consider creating MOUs between key LA County Departments and LA City.
5. Request the CLA to coordinate amendments to LAHSA JPA and provide bi-weekly status updates.
6. Continue the work to explore the establishment of an LA City Public Health Department.
7. Endorse The Center concept as proposed by the Committee for Greater LA as an independent nonprofit organization.
8. Involve the Committee for Greater LA, and eventually The Center, in deliberations regarding a LA City Public Health Department and Continuum of Care.
9. Request City Controller to audit LA County Departments of Public and Mental Health to determine at what scale City residents are accessing services.
10. Support Senate Bill 679.