



Fwd: Please accept this comment on CF 20-1376-S1

Office of the City Clerk <cityclerk@lacity.org>
 To: City Clerk Council and Public Services <clerk.cps@lacity.org>

Tue, Jul 26, 2022 at 4:45 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Gina Thornburg** <ginat.cfvn@gmail.com>
 Date: Tue, Jul 26, 2022 at 4:42 PM
 Subject: Please accept this comment on CF 20-1376-S1
 To: <cityclerk@lacity.org>

Dear City Clerk:

After numerous attempts, I cannot submit my public comment through the Public Comment Portal. Please accept the following comment. Thank you in advance.

Dear Councilmembers:

Criminalizing poverty and homelessness further deepens the trauma that unhoused Angelenos experience and lengthens the time that they remain on the streets. Not only do I urge you to vote NO on the expansion of 41.18 tomorrow but I ask you to rescind the ordinance altogether. It is a wrong-headed policy that is based on wishful thinking, if not an outright lie: There are not enough shelter beds or beds in supportive housing to accommodate the thousands of unhoused people on the streets of Los Angeles.

I urge you to read the report "No Safe Place: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities" issued by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP) in 2014, as well as the 2022 Rand Corp. report "Recent Trends Among the Unsheltered in Three Los Angeles Neighborhoods: An Interim Report on the Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey (LA LEADS) Project."

One of the NLCHP report's findings is that banning sitting and lying, and storing belongings, in public spaces causes homeless people to suffer. Other findings are that such sit-lie-storage bans do not address the root causes of homelessness and they violate the civil rights of unhoused people. Where are these people supposed to go? Please see, for example, this passage from page 9 of the report:

"Criminalization laws raise important constitutional concerns, and courts across the country have found that many such laws violate the rights of homeless people. Courts have invalidated or enjoined enforcement of criminalization laws on the grounds that they violate constitutional protections such as the right to freedom of speech under the First Amendment, freedom from cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment, and the right to due process of law guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. Moreover, the criminalization of homelessness violates international human rights treaties to which the U.S. is a party. In March, the U.N. Human Rights Committee, reviewing U.S. compliance under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, found that the criminalization of homelessness in the U.S. violated the treaty."

Moreover, these bans violently disrupt the lives of homeless people, causing their belongings, medications, identification papers, treasured photographs, and other important personal possessions to be discarded by LA Sanitation. The pursuant sweeps triggered by bans such as 41.18 exacerbate and prolong trauma. They also break nascent bonds with outreach workers, who may not be able to relocate unhoused people with whom they had been working to make a connection.

The Rand Corp. report found "a near-universal interest in obtaining housing among [the] survey respondents," which busts the myth that unhoused people do not want to move indoors. Rand researchers also found that unhoused people want the same thing that housed people already have: privacy. They would prefer private housing, not living in congregate settings, where many women and other people who have survived sexual trauma and domestic violence feel unsafe and triggered.

The Rand Corp. report also highlights significant weaknesses in the provision of housing to people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. More than 40% of the study respondents had never been contacted to move in, finally, to housing, and there are "extraordinary delays" in connecting people to housing.

This ordinance must be rescinded. There are simply not enough safe beds with adequate services for the tens of thousands of unhoused Angelenos. What worked in CD 3 cannot be presumed to work citywide. It is also highly questionable whether a Safe Parking space or a bed without privacy in a congregate room actually constitutes housing. Would you live there?

Furthermore, since 41.18 took effect, the rate of homeless deaths is increasing. (Please see At Least 1,612 Unhoused People Died Last Year. That's 222 More Lives Lost Than 2020 | LAist). Supporters of this ordinance are directly causing more people to die. Sit and lie with that for a moment.

I strongly urge you to vote NO tomorrow and to rescind 41.18 in its entirety. The City Council and the Mayor's Office should start anew to weave an enduring safety net for unhoused people and folks on the verge of homelessness. As of right now, there are very few access centers, where people may physically go to learn what services, programs, vouchers, and more are available to them. There should be one in every neighborhood-council district. This would be just a starting point. The City's approach, too, has been carceral, often imposing infantilizing rules and restrictions on human beings as conditions for living in temporary housing units, such as Project Roomkey. This approach, too, needs rethinking and reimagining.

Sincerely,

Gina K. Thornburg, PhD

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Gina K. Thornburg, PhD
 Geographer, Author, Editor, Activist, Speaker

8/4/22, 3:09 PM

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Housing-, Environmental-, and Food-Justice Issues
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