HOMELESSNESS AND HEALTH

MOTION

People experiencing homelessness (PEH) often face significant physical and behavioral health challenges, including mental illness and substance use disorders, that require connections to appropriate medical care and supportive services. Addressing these needs is an important component of helping individuals experiencing homelessness achieve stability and successfully transition into interim and permanent housing.

Under state law, public mental health and substance use disorder services in the City of Los Angeles are administered by the County of Los Angeles through its Department of Mental Health and Department of Public Health. The City has no direct control over how, where, or at what scale those services are deployed within its boundaries, and the need among PEH in the City continues to exceed the services available. The City cannot rely on the County alone to meet this need and must identify other ways to bring behavioral health services directly into the City.

Federally funded clinics offer one such pathway. Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), including Health Care for the Homeless grantees funded under Section 330(h) of the Public Health Service Act, FQHC Look-Alikes, and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) supported by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, already operate in Los Angeles. These clinics receive federal grant funding and enhanced Medi-Cal and Medicare reimbursement, are required to serve patients regardless of ability to pay, and commonly provide integrated primary care, mental health care, and substance use disorder treatment, including medications for addiction treatment.

Because these clinics draw on federal funding and reimbursement, the City can partner with them directly. Options may include co-locating clinic services at City-funded interim and permanent housing sites, deploying mobile clinics and street medicine teams, making City-owned property available for new or satellite clinic sites, and other partnership models such as supporting clinic applications for federal funding. Coordinated approaches would allow the City to pair mental health, addiction, and crisis services with homelessness programs without relying solely on County capacity.

The City of Berkeley and the Tri-City Mental Health Authority, which serves the cities of Pomona, Claremont, and La Verne, operate as local mental health authorities under state law. The City should understand whether a similar structure is legally available to it.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council instruct the City Administrative Officer and the Chief Legislative Analyst, with assistance from the City Attorney, the Los Angeles Housing Department, and other relevant departments, to report on a strategy for pursuing federal funding and utilizing federally funded clinics to meet the mental health, substance use disorder, and crisis care needs of people experiencing homelessness in the City, including:

1. An inventory of federally funded clinics operating in or serving the City, including FQHCs, Health Care for the Homeless grantees, FQHC Look-Alikes, and CCBHCs, with their service sites, capacity, and the behavioral health services each provides to PEH;

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2. The scope of mental health, substance use disorder, and crisis services these clinics can provide and bill for through federal grants, Medi-Cal, and Medicare independent of County contracts, and any services that remain under the County's exclusive authority;
3. Options for the City to partner directly with existing clinics;
4. State or federal funding opportunities available to expand clinic capacity in the City and whether the City or a City-created entity could qualify for state or federal health center funding;
5. Cost estimates for a pilot program placing clinic services at City homelessness program sites; and
6. The City's legal authority to establish its own behavioral health department or jurisdiction, similar to the City of Berkeley and the Tri-City Mental Health Authority.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Council instruct the City Administrative Officer, with assistance from the Chief Legislative Analyst and the City Attorney, to report on options to establish dedicated healthcare expertise to support the City's homelessness programs and policies, including through in-house staff and consulting services, with expertise in healthcare systems, policy, financing, and service delivery.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Council instruct the City Administrative Officer, with assistance from the Chief Legislative Analyst, to identify and evaluate any other funding options available to support mental health, substance use disorder, and healthcare services for people experiencing homelessness in the City, including federal, state, County, and philanthropic sources.

PRESENTED BY: _____
MARQUEECE HARRIS-DAWSON
Councilmember, 8th District

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SECONDED BY: _____