



# OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

HALL OF JUSTICE

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF



June 23, 2021

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

## LOCAL STATE OF EMERGENCY REGARDING THE HOMELESS CRISIS

Since taking office, I have watched state, county, and local government fail to address the homeless crisis affecting the residents of Los Angeles County (County). Despite spending in excess of \$6.5 billion over the last ten years to address the issue, and the creation and efforts of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), nothing has changed. In fact, the homeless problem has only grown by approximately 20 percent each year. According to LAHSA's 2020 count, Los Angeles County had over 66,000 persons experiencing homelessness living in our streets. Conservative estimates for 2021 put the figure over 80,000 persons.

Our County is facing many existential threats. With violent crimes on the rise, a nearly 100 percent increase in homicides, illegal marijuana cultivation and distribution by organized crime rings, and the homeless population spiraling out of control, our residents are being held hostage in their local communities.

Residents and business owners should not be subjected to walking around piles of trash and human feces in their neighborhoods, businesses, parks, and communities. According to a recently released report by the University of Southern California Dornsife-Union Bank LABarometer livability survey, 10 percent of Angelenos plan to leave Los Angeles County in the next year, a 40 percent increase from 2019.

Having participated in the homeless count, visiting areas affected by this crisis, participating in many community meetings, speaking with business leaders and residents, common sense is telling us the failed formula applied year after year to address the problem is *NOT* working.

211 WEST TEMPLE STREET, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

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— Since 1850 —

As the elected Sheriff providing safety to over ten million residents, I have been inundated with calls for action by citizens from all over the County. Although you are only accountable to constituents in your respective districts, I was placed into office by residents of all five districts and I am accountable to them.

I strongly urge the Board of Supervisors (Board) to declare a local state of emergency on the homeless crisis. Los Angeles County is experiencing an influx of transients from across the nation taking advantage of our services. Needless to say, these individuals are taking valuable services away from our local homeless population and creating further hardship on our communities. We have homeless individuals dying everyday on our city streets because they are not getting the services they need. Failed policies, self-interest groups, and political agendas are enabling a national crisis to fester within our communities.

Venice Beach, Olvera Street, and Hollywood are currently under siege. The homeless situation and lawlessness citizens are experiencing is keeping tourists from coming to Los Angeles County. Venice was once the number two tourist destination in Southern California, second only to Disneyland. The economic hardships our local business owners and residents are facing is unacceptable. The homeless situation in Los Angeles County is at a crisis level. If we do not get a handle on this problem, more businesses will close adding to already increasing unemployment rates.

Fires from homeless encampments are threatening our local residents who live within mountainous areas. On a daily basis, fires are started by the transient population taking refuge in the wilderness. With the current drought California is experiencing, resources are desperately needed to prevent a catastrophic event within these communities.

The Board needs to tap into all available state/federal funding and resources to help the residents of our beloved County. Because of this national crisis, the Board should consider applying for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In an era where "defunding" the police is a popular term used by a vocal minority, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) needs the necessary funds to prevent the catastrophic loss of human life and address the existential threats we are facing.

Acting on the authority given to me in the California Constitution under Government Code 26660, 26601, and 26602, I will be taking action addressing the homeless crisis as my authority encompasses all of Los Angeles County. It is my duty and responsibility to step in and handle a crisis when others have failed to address them, and I always seek collaborative partnerships with stakeholders.

As the Board knows, the LASD has the Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) who are experts at providing outreach and linking the homeless population to services they desperately need. Their actions are recognized as best practices, and the deputies assigned to the team are a compassionate group of individuals who are truly experts in their field. Despite some Board members attempting to spread a false narrative on the good work HOST is doing, HOST remains committed to helping solve a problem left by failed politicians.

The LASD has a proven formula that needs to be swiftly executed and is supported by the court, the residents, and businesses. HOST has a proven method to connect our homeless population with the needed support without requiring any extreme measures. The Board needs to provide emergency funding to HOST so I can expand their efforts across the County to properly address a crisis that has been allowed to metastasize on multiple fronts.

We must not abdicate our duties as public servants and hold ourselves accountable for the jobs we do. Rather than create unnecessary red tape and bureaucracies, join me in this endeavor to connect the homeless population to the services they need and restore the quality of life the residents and business owners of Los Angeles County deserve.

Should you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alex Villanueva', written in a cursive style.

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ALEX VILLANUEVA  
SHERIFF