



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 23-0017, **Version:** 1

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Recommendation to adopt resolution proclaiming the existence of a local emergency caused by conditions and threatened conditions of homelessness within the City of Long Beach, which if not corrected, constitutes an imminent and proximate threat to the safety of persons and property within the City. (Citywide)

The City Manager has been requested by Mayor Rex Richardson and Councilmember Mary Zendejas to bring a declaration of a Citywide State of Emergency on homelessness. City of Long Beach (City) has designated significant resources to address homelessness in the City. Since 2020, more than 530 new interim housing units have been developed. The City opened the first year around ABC Shelter, secured three hotels along with the County, and recently purchased the 78-bed Luxury Inn and more than 30 modular shelter units. The City also implemented three Restorative Engagement to Achieve Collective Health (REACH) teams, increased the number of outreach staff and call takers from four to 27, expanded hours for weekend outreach, begun to conduct localized interdepartmental response, partnered to provide mobile health care services, and doubled Police Department Quality of Life teams. The New Year, 2023, will include mobile Multi-Service Center (MSC) outreach teams, a mobile mental health and substance use treatment van, as well as continuing focus on mental health prevention and treatment access.

The City continues to have approximately 3,300 people experiencing homelessness Citywide, which is a 77 percent increase since 2017 and a 62 percent increase from 2020 to 2022. Of the 3,300 people, more than 2,000 are unsheltered. The City and local community-based organizations provide approximately 1,300 interim shelter beds, and most of these shelters are operating at capacity. This leaves few options for those currently without shelter.

Homelessness has disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander Long Beach residents who are approximately three times more likely to experience homelessness than other populations. Black people comprise only 13 percent of the population of the City but, in the most recent homelessness count, completed in February, 2022, accounted for approximately 36 percent of people experiencing homelessness. The City also noted a 48 percent growth in the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness since 2019.

Based on the City's 2022 Homeless Point in Time Count of those experiencing homelessness, more than 40 percent have experienced violence or trauma in their lives, and 6 percent were fleeing violence when they became homeless. It is also estimated that 31 percent of people experiencing homelessness in the City are affected by a chronic health condition, 29 percent are affected by substance abuse, 37 percent are affected by a serious mental illness, 36 percent are affected by physical disabilities, 23 percent are affected by

developmental disabilities, and 24 percent are affected by traumatic brain injuries. The number of people with severe mental illness has more than doubled to 1,200 people and those with a substance use disorder has increased by 70 percent to 950 people. The needed treatment access has strained the City's ability to provide appropriate shelter and housing and requires assistance from the County Health and Mental Health Departments to provide the necessary public services.

In 2022, 101 people experiencing homelessness died while living on the street before they could access the services and housing they need. The average age of those who died while homeless was 47 years old and over 75 percent of the causes of death were unnatural. This represents a drastic 225 percent increase in comparison to the number of people who died in 2017.

Shelter and housing is particularly important during these coming winter months when people experiencing homelessness in the City are likely to face heightened exposure and dangers from living outdoors, and heightened dangers from the combination of COVID-19, flu outbreak and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). It is projected that the City will face an acute shortage of winter homeless shelters through March 2023, with fewer than half the number of shelter sites available in the County of Los Angeles as in the winter of 2021-2022 and nearly two-thirds fewer shelter beds.

The County and State's eviction moratorium, which has protected many Long Beach residents from falling into homelessness, ends concurrently with the end of the California's State of Local Emergency regarding the COVID-19 pandemic on February 1, 2023. The State's COVID-19 State of Emergency, which has provided resources to keep many Long Beach residents from falling into homelessness also ends in February of 2023, thus requiring immediate action to create replacement and additional housing and shelter.

If the City Council proclaims a local emergency, in accordance with the provisions of Long Beach Municipal Code Chapter 2.69, the City Clerk shall include the matter of the necessity for continuing the local emergency on the City Council agenda for review at least every fourteen (14) days until the City Council terminates said local emergency. A local emergency must be terminated at the earliest possible date as the conditions warrant.

This Resolution requests the City Council adopt a Resolution and find that there is a need for proclaiming the existence of a local emergency caused by conditions or threatened conditions of homelessness within the City of Long Beach, which if not corrected, constitutes an imminent and proximate threat to the safety of persons and property within the City for a period of six months, subject to being renewed. If approved, the City Council's approval will (1) facilitate requests by the City to other local jurisdictions, the County of Los Angeles, the State of California and the federal government; (2) request the Governor and State Legislature to declare a state of emergency to combat homelessness and direct resources to support the efforts of major cities in the state of California to address this problem; (3) allow the City Manager, or officials designated by the City Manager, to take

preventive measures necessary to protect persons and property within the scope of the local emergency.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Anita Lakhani and by Revenue Management Officer Geraldine Alejo on December 29, 2022.

City Council action is requested on January 10, 2023.

The full fiscal impact is unknown at this time, and will be based on the work required and projects implemented to respond to the homelessness crisis. The Adopted Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 23) Budget includes additional one-time and structural funding specifically designated to address the homelessness crisis, including additional REACH team staffing, a mobile mental health and substance use treatment van, and support for mental health prevention and treatment access. During FY 23, it is anticipated that funding required to support current City costs to increase and expand Citywide efforts will be covered within existing department resources, as well as available General Fund one-time funding. In addition, staff will also continue to pursue County, State and Federal funding for these efforts. As the Citywide strategy is developed, and funding is identified, staff will return to City Council with fiscal impacts and requests for appropriation. Execution of the recommendation will result in staffing impacts beyond the normal budgeted scope of duties and is expected to affect Citywide staffing workload and cause priorities to shift due to the emergency. There is no local job impact associated with this recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

THOMAS B. MODICA  
CITY MANAGER