

MOTION

Through November of this year, 1,248 people experiencing homelessness have died in Los Angeles County, a rate of nearly four people every day. This figure represents a 32% increase from the same point in 2019, which was itself a record high. As the city's murder rate has risen in 2020, a full 20% of victims have been unhoused—though unhoused Angelenos make up approximately 1% of LA's population.

Homelessness in this city is not only the product of income inequality, racism, an unaffordable housing market, and insufficient health and mental health care. It is also a crisis of alienation. Many people living on LA's streets lack the support networks and stable relationships so vital to human thriving—including regular contact with caseworkers in a non-punitive context.

As a result, those in urgent need of services often don't have an obvious place to turn for help, and have trouble finding the assistance they need to navigate the byzantine processes to achieve shelter, housing, and medical treatment.

Outreach teams either directly staffed or coordinated by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) were designed to fulfill this need, but they have not been set up for success. A tangle of competing agencies, authorities, contracts, and mandates has hindered LAHSA's ability to provide consistent outreach to unhoused Angelenos. No less than a systemic change is needed to better leverage its efforts.

Fortunately, there's already momentum behind reevaluating how outreach is conducted in LA—Councilmembers Martinez and O'Farrell put forward a motion in January requesting a reevaluation of LAHSA's structure and services, and in 2019 the City Controller released an audit of LA's existing outreach programs. The audit found that the majority of contacts between caseworkers and people experiencing homelessness came during encampment cleanups. Among the report's recommendations was a shift from a "reactive" approach to a "proactive" system: establishing consistent outreach schedules where unhoused people can be engaged by the same geographically-assigned caseworker on a predictable basis.

Proactive outreach has been shown to expedite the path to housing and services, expand data collection, maintain sanitation, and improve relationships between unhoused people and their housed neighbors or local businesses. Most importantly, regular contact from caseworkers without the presence of armed law enforcement helps build meaningful relationships of trust, which are essential to the work of helping someone from a tent into a home for good. Especially for those struggling with mental health challenges and substance abuse, regular contact with trained outreach workers is an essential part of getting care.

As the city moves to expand the availability of shelter and housing, expanding proactive outreach is an essential piece of Los Angeles's mobilization against homelessness. The city needs more information to better understand how outreach programs are funded, how staff are managed and deployed, and the amount of time allocated to reactive and proactive outreach. Critically, it is essential to understand how City, County, State, and federal program guidelines complicate the operations of these programs. LAHSA should be requested to provide a report immediately on these matters, and identify solutions to more

effectively align our outreach programs to better serve persons experiencing homelessness, and to create systems that make greater accountability possible.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council request that the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, in coordination with the Homeless Initiative division within the County CEO, which administers Measure H outreach programs, report within 60 days on the status of outreach programs in Los Angeles, and include a review of how teams are managed and coordinated; the amount of time and funding resources allocated to outreach programs; where in the city these outreach efforts are taking place and with what consistency; how such outreach efforts are coordinated with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and Department of Health Services; how and what kind of data is shared about these efforts with the city; how funds and time are distributed between proactive and reactive outreach efforts; and solutions and opportunities to align outreach programs in a manner that would most effectively serve persons experiencing homelessness.

I THEREFORE ALSO MOVE that the City Administrative Officer, with the assistance of the Chief Legislative Analyst, report back on all city funded outreach contracts and services, both proactive, reactive, and those available on an emergency basis, which are carried out by either the County, LAHSA, or the City.

PRESENTED BY: _____
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SECONDED BY: _____
NURY MARTINEZ
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