

# PROVIDER ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS

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## (LEGAL SERVICES CAUCUS)

September 10, 2018

The Honorable Eric Garcetti  
Mayor of Los Angeles  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mayor Garcetti:

As more details emerge about “enhanced enforcement” zones that are planned for A Bridge Home sites, we are disappointed to see criminalization take such a prominent role in this new initiative. Increasing arrests and confiscations under LAMC 56.11 and 41.18d would be a dramatic step backward from the best practices adopted by the City’s Comprehensive Homeless Strategy two years ago. It also contradicts the decriminalization policy (E5) adopted by the County’s Approved Strategies to Combat Homelessness.

It further contradicts federal policy, including the annual Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the Continuum of Care Program that LAHSA will apply for this month. Scoring criteria for this NOFA requires applicants to identify “specific strategies to prevent criminalization of homelessness within the CoC’s geographic area.” Under federal guidelines published by the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, “The forced dispersal of people from encampment settings is not an appropriate solution or strategy, accomplishes nothing toward the goal of linking people to permanent housing opportunities, and can make it more difficult to provide such lasting solutions to people who have been sleeping and living in the encampment.”

Most of all, the criminalization of homelessness goes against your message of empathy and compassion. Nowhere in your State of the City description of A Bridge Home did you talk about arresting more homeless people. Instead you said: “We are fighting to make sure that our children don’t have to ask, ‘Why is that woman sleeping on a bench? Doesn’t she have someone to take care of her?’ The answer is yes. We are going to take care of her.”

That spirit of compassion is our only path forward in responding to homelessness as a city. Even if every Council district opens a shelter and all of the money that has been set aside for A Bridge Home is fully utilized, we know that tens of thousands of Angelenos will still be left on the streets with nowhere to go. It is impractical, cruel, and likely unconstitutional to arrest homeless people and take away their belongings when space does not exist for them beyond the streets.

Sincerely,

Bet Tzedek Legal Services  
Inner City Law Center  
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

Mental Health Advocacy Services  
Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County  
Public Counsel