



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF SUTTER

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January 21, 2022

Governor Gavin Newsom  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor:

On behalf of the Sutter County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to add Sutter County's voice to the call for an extraordinary session of the California Legislature to address the widespread and growing issue of homelessness in almost every community in our state.

Sutter County has worked in good faith with non-profit agencies, faith-based organizations, homeless advocates, the business community, other local government agencies in our region, and the state of California, to address the growing problem of homelessness here. Our award-winning emergency shelter program has placed nearly 100 people in permanent housing since 2019, and we accepted a Home Key grant for close to \$7 million to purchase a vacant hotel for affordable rental housing that we turned over to Habitat for Humanity to manage—providing 60 new low-cost rental units serving largely seniors, the disabled, and veterans. We recently celebrated the opening of a new 40-unit subsidized apartment complex targeting the chronically homeless who are dealing with mental illness and other issues. We have constructed a designated overnight camping area, with lighting and security. COVID-19 has reduced the number of beds we can make available at our emergency shelter, however, and our ability to enforce our no camping ordinance is limited by the number of shelter beds available, in accordance with the decision in the federal lawsuit, *Martin vs. Boise, Idaho*, which precludes enforcement of such ordinances when there are no alternatives to sleeping in public spaces.

Despite considerable and ongoing expenditure of County general fund money and state tax dollars, and despite the improvement in the lives of those people we have managed to house and assist with a variety of Health and Human Services and job training programs, the homeless numbers in our community continue to rise with the same tide that has engulfed communities across this state. Our shelter is at capacity (restricted because of COVID-19 protocols). There is a waiting list of hundreds for the affordable rental units managed by Habitat for Humanity. Every day in California more homeless become housed through a local program; and every day in California more people become homeless in a California community.

California has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation, and our state is downright lousy at providing shelter. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, in our nation 61 percent of the homeless population on any given night is sleeping in suitable shelter. It is the opposite in California. In California, 70 percent of the state's large homeless population are not sheltered on any given night; they sleep in cars and trailers in commercial parking lots, on sidewalks and in alleys, in bushes around residential and commercial buildings, along the state's rivers.

Members of the Board

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This is a California problem being addressed earnestly at the local level, but with only a modicum of success. This issue is bigger than any community can handle on its own. An extraordinary session of the Legislature addressing just homelessness would place the matter squarely before the legislative body with ultimate authority in providing resources and guidance for mental health services, drug and alcohol programs, affordable housing, emergency shelter, homeless encampment cleanup. Communities need clarity on what can be done when homeless individuals in California refuse shelter and programs to assist them get housed. What can California do to provide affordable housing? What are the best models? What is working anywhere? There will be large differences of opinion on what the underlying reasons are for homelessness, and large differences of opinion on what solutions are viable, but it would focus everyone's attention on the growing humanitarian problem.

Sincerely,



Dan Flores, Chair  
Sutter County Board of Supervisors

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