

## Communication from Public

**Name:**

**Date Submitted:** 09/04/2019 01:31 PM

**Council File No:** 19-0914

**Comments for Public Posting:** Expansion of Access Center Funding Access centers are the primary youth homelessness prevention services that exist within the City of Los Angeles. Up to 5,000 unique young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability access day services and drop-in centers in the City of Los Angeles every year. Access centers, in conjunction with street outreach, are critical for connecting youth experiencing homelessness to the services that they need yet are continuously underfunded. Access centers are essential for a trauma-informed model of care, prioritize individual self-determination and provide diversion from the overburdened homeless services system. Expand the City's Youth and Young Adult Workforce Development and Readiness Trainings programs In 2019, 67% of young people experiencing homelessness were unemployed in Los Angeles and 25% cited economic hardship as their main reason for unstable housing. Employment readiness and workforce development is critical for successful exit from homelessness as well as for prevention of long-term chronic homelessness. The LA:RISE Program can expand funding to youth and young adult specific internships to promote employment in social enterprises and prepare young people experiencing homelessness for the workforce. It is necessary to expand for-profit partnerships with the LA:RISE Program and prioritize programs that are youth-driven. Prioritize Bridge Housing Beds for Young People Experiencing Homelessness The City of Los Angeles continues to expand bridge housing, yet, very little of the funding has been designated specifically for young people. Bridge housing is essential for successfully exiting out of homelessness as other long-term housing programs (i.e. rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing) expand. As the waitlist for accessing rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing continues to grow, the importance of bridge housing grows simultaneously. Bridge housing addresses the gap between exiting the street and entering a permanent housing solution by increasing a young person's long-term success in these programs and reduces the risk of a young person returning to homelessness (see Morton et al, 2018). Increase the Number of Transitional Living Placements (TLP) for Young People Across the City There are less than 800 TLP beds across the Los Angeles Continuum of Care, which vastly

underserves the multiple thousands of unsheltered young people in the City of Los Angeles. The City of Los Angeles has the capacity to increase the number of TLP beds by creating and or designating infrastructure projects that would be reserved for young adults. Transitional living as a model supports adolescent and young adult development and can prioritize specific underserved youth populations including pregnant and parenting, system involved, and LGBT+. Fund research and innovative pilot projects to ending youth homelessness It's necessary to evaluate implemented solutions for continuous refinement and improvement.

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (Cast)  
**Date Submitted:** 09/04/2019 02:54 PM  
**Council File No:** 19-0914  
**Comments for Public Posting:** Comments Attached

September 2, 2019

Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, Chair  
Los Angeles City Council, Homelessness & Poverty Committee  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 480  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmember O'Farrell:

**RE: Request that New State Funds Be Used to Provide Specialized Housing Services for Human Trafficking Survivors in Los Angeles**

Founded in 1998 in Los Angeles, California, CAST was one of the first organizations in the United States to provide comprehensive social and legal services for survivors of human trafficking. Additionally, CAST opened the first shelter in the country exclusively dedicated to providing physically and psychologically safe housing for survivors and currently operates two shelters serving human trafficking survivors in Los Angeles. CAST serves male, female, and child victims of trafficking. To date, CAST has provided services to over 2000 survivors and their family members, as well as thousands of hours of technical consultation to organizations working on this issue across the country and internationally. Our experience providing legal and social services to survivors gives us critical information about the real-life experiences of trafficking victims. It is based on this experience that CAST offers the below recommendations that specialized housing resources be developed for human trafficking victims as part of the new state funding that will be allocated as part of the Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAPP) in Los Angeles.

Thousands of women, men, and children, representing both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals, are victimized by traffickers every year in California. According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC), California has consistently ranked at the top of the NHTRC hotline calls from 2012 through 2018.

Los Angeles is particularly vulnerable to human trafficking because of factors such as large runaway and homeless youth populations, proximity to international borders, the number of ports and airports, a significant immigrant population, and a large economy including industries that attract forced labor and sex trafficking. Recent public attention and media on this issue has meant that more and more victims of trafficking are coming forward seeking services. In today's political climate of fear—resources for specialized housing services for trafficking victims are even more needed. CAST knows that traffickers exploit this fear—the fear of lack of housing and that no one will believe or understand that they are victims.

The link between homeless and human trafficking is clear. The 2018 annual homeless study for Los Angeles County reported that over 5,000 of the 54,000 homeless on any given

night in California reported they had been victims of sex or labor trafficking.<sup>1</sup> This is almost 10% of homeless population, yet less than 100 specialized beds for trafficking survivors exist in Los Angeles today and no beds exist for male trafficking survivors.

Human trafficking services are homeless prevention services. Under the federal definition of homeless, labor and sex trafficking victims are all considered homeless. Traffickers often threaten human trafficking victims with being homeless to force them to work or engage in commercial sex. They also use it as a way of securing loyalty so victims feel they are complicit in their own exploitation. Across the country it is well understood that housing is the greatest unmet need for human trafficking victims. Human trafficking victims need specialized shelter programs as well as transitional housing.

Additionally, the failure to increase domestic violence funding and the failure to fund transitional housing puts services for human trafficking survivors at even greater risk. Domestic violence providers are the most common referrals for human trafficking victims and have the most trauma-informed services. Therefore, CAST also respectfully requests that you support the DV Provider to End Homelessness and makes the following human trafficking specific request.

There are a limited number of shelter beds dedicated to human trafficking survivors in the United States and in Los Angeles. Given the urgent unmet needs of human trafficking survivors, dedicating more funds to housing for human trafficking survivors would be a meaningful, concrete step to wraparound services they need to fully escape and recover from their trafficking abuse.

Additionally, many human trafficking survivors are not accepted into other housing programs, due to not meeting the criteria for their specific funding. In addition, it is especially challenging finding housing for male survivors, transgender survivors, and transition-age youth survivors. Foreign national survivors are also vulnerable due to language barriers (they often come from countries that are not served by other service providers in Los Angeles) and immigration status bars access to some services and benefits.

Further, there are many models of Trauma-Informed Treatment, but trafficking survivors must have access to Trauma-Informed Care in an approach that should be implemented throughout the housing agency, from leadership to line staff, and within the programming. The key components that should be included are safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment/voice/choice, and cultural/historical/gender issues. As important is the idea that the doors for services are always open so folks can come into programs, and re-enter again if needed.

Finally staffing must be designed to meet trafficking survivor's comprehensive needs. In order to develop a program that deals with one's housing and crisis needs, it is important to have a licensed clinician on staff in order to provide supervision to the line staff, but also to provide overall clinical oversight. In addition, multiple case managers must develop plans

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<sup>1</sup> *Prevalence Study on Human Trafficking in the City of Los Angeles*, Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST) and Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women (LACSW) (2018).

and work towards permanent housing with each participant, as well as to manage all of the other needs that the resident is addressing (i.e. basic necessities, children's needs, employment, education, safety, etc.). Having 24-7 staffing is important, especially to address medical or mental health emergencies and safety. Also, all staff should go through training on human trafficking (in order to learn how to identify it and how to provide services), domestic violence, and trauma-informed care (which includes training on vicarious trauma). Seeking safety and motivational interviewing are great trainings for staff as well. For trafficking victim's legal services are also critical components to removing long-term barriers for trafficking victims, as well as meeting immediate crisis needs and staffing should have at least two attorneys involved in each program.

#### Requests:

- Collect better data on both sex and labor trafficking in LAHSA's annual demographic survey so that data is available by district as well as by type of trafficking, age, and gender.
- Fund a comprehensive evaluative study of human trafficking service providers and housing needs and barriers. Currently, there has been very little research conducted on best practices in the field of comprehensive service provisions for human trafficking victims. While there are organizations offering assistance to trafficking victims in California, the effectiveness and quality of these services has not been rigorously studied. An evaluative study to understand best practices is crucial to ensure that LA City's homelessness resources are being well-spent in the most targeted and strategic way possible, in order to provide the greatest number of victims with the highest quality of care.
- Ensure funding is in place to provide training on all forms of human trafficking, sex and labor, for outreach workers and direct service staff providing homelessness services.
- Increase funding for additional LAHSA trauma shelter beds specific for human trafficking survivors. Funding at \$73 per night is required to meet the needs of this vulnerable victim population who often has no connection or support in the community and has suffered years of exploitation in sex or labor trafficking.
- Provide funding to open the first human trafficking crisis and/ or bridge shelter program for male victims of human trafficking. 25-30% of CAST clients are male survivors and we believe this number could be higher if more resources were available for male victims. The focus in the past has been on women and child survivors.
- Ensure funding is allocated to place housing specialists in anti-trafficking programs.
- Ensure increased resources for low-cost permanent housing as stable long-term housing for trafficking victims is nearly impossible to secure and this leads to survivors returning to their traffickers who often provide housing.

- Ensure separate resources are allocated for human trafficking and domestic violence programs as the programmatic needs of this victim population and supportive services can often be vastly different.

CAST respectfully requests that in proportion to the identified homeless population in LA who has suffered human trafficking, that a proportional amount of the new state funding be dedicated to specialized services for male and female victims of human trafficking. Over the last 5 years Los Angeles has increasingly recognized the issue of human trafficking in our own backyards. Now is the time to support the short and long-term housing and wrap-around services needs of this population.

Sincerely,



Kay Buck, CEO & Executive Director, CAST

CC: Councilmember Bonin  
Councilmember Harris-Dawson  
Councilmember Rodriguez  
Councilmember Ryu