

MOTION

Yesterday, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article detailing an analysis they conducted regarding the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA) point-in-time count of those experiencing homelessness throughout the County of Los Angeles, otherwise known as the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count.

In the analysis, the *LA Times* examined more than 4,000 questionnaires taken during the count and claim to have found "that about 76% of individuals living outside on the streets reported being, or were observed to be, affected by mental illness, substance abuse, poor health or a physical disability."

The article states that LAHSA narrowly interpreted the data to produce much lower numbers which according to LAHSA was done in accordance with a format required by federal guidelines. In fact, the LAHSA report released earlier this year states that only 29% of the homeless population had either a mental illness or substance abuse disorder. Of the 76% previously mentioned, the *Times* claims that 67% of individuals had either a mental illness or a substance abuse disorder, with 46% being affected by a substance abuse disorder and 51% being affected by a mental illness. These numbers are shockingly higher than the LAHSA report indicates.

The data obtained in the Homeless Count is supposed to be used to direct resources to where they are needed most, but inconsistent data could potentially lead to resources not being allocated where they are truly needed most. Any discrepancy in the accuracy of these numbers is unacceptable to the people of Los Angeles and a disservice to the 36,000 Los Angeles residents that are currently experiencing homelessness. Therefore, a thorough evaluation of *The Times* analysis and the LAHSA report needs to be conducted immediately and reported back to Council. If the number of individuals that are affected by a mental illness and/or a substance abuse is in fact higher than previously reported, a conversation and a thorough analysis of what steps need to be taken should be conducted immediately.

It has long been the public's perception that the homelessness crisis is exacerbated by an underlying mental health and substance abuse crisis. If the City of Los Angeles is going to be effective in its goal of solving the homelessness crisis, it is vitally important that the City has the most accurate data possible in order to enact the most effective policies and deploy the most appropriate resources for those critically in need and living on the streets of Los Angeles.

Now more than ever, it is important to strengthen all the City's efforts involving mental health and substance abuse such as the LAPD's Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) and the System-Wide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART), and to further support Los Angeles County programs that integrate with the City's efforts to solve the homelessness crisis. This includes, but is not limited to the Los Angeles County Departments of Mental Health and Public Health.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority be directed to report on the discrepancy between their count and the *LA Times* analysis including detailed information explaining how the LAHSA report and *LA Times* analysis have such large discrepancies; how this discrepancy could affect the City's current outreach efforts, housing strategies and priorities; how the discrepancy could affect resource allocation; and a report on how well equipped LAHSA's outreach teams are to effectively service individuals with mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Los Angeles Police Department be directed to report on the current status of the Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) and its System-wide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART), including but not limited to: the MEU's coordination with the newly established Comprehensive Cleaning and Rapid Engagement (CARE) teams; the MEU's ability to respond to calls for service including response times as well as a breakdown of the unit's overall capabilities and any potential staffing needs or improvements that need to be made so that the Department can be effective in its response to the needs of those experiencing homelessness that are affected by mental illness.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City's Homelessness Coordinator be instructed with assistance from Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, Chief Legislative Analyst and the County Departments of Mental Health and Public Health to report on current programs in effect that address mental health and substance abuse among the population that is experiencing homelessness as well as recommendations for improvements to better assist the vast number of houseless residents that are affected by mental health illness or substance abuse disorders.

PRESENTED BY

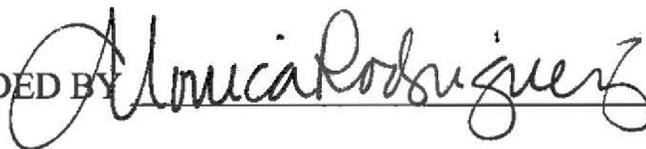


JOHN S. LEE
Councilmember, 12th District



SEP 9 8 2019

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