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LA'S HOMELESS RESPONSE LEADERS UNITE TO ADDRESS UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS AS HOMELESS COUNT RISES

New leadership at LA City, LA County, and LAHSA are taking bold steps to address street homelessness.

LOS ANGELES – The 2023 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count results were released today, showing a 9% rise in homelessness on any given night in Los Angeles County to an estimated 75,518 people and a 10% rise in the City of Los Angeles to an estimated 46,260 people. While this year's increases are slightly lower than previous year-over-year increases in the homeless count, they continue a steady growth trend of people experiencing homelessness in the annual Point-in-Time Count (PIT Count).

The rise in L.A. County's homeless population coincides with increases in major cities across the United States. Chicago and Portland saw double-digit increases (+57% and +20% respectively), while several Southern California counties experienced increases larger than Los Angeles, including San Bernadino (+26%), San Diego (+22%), Kern (+22%), and Riverside (+12%).

While the number of unhoused people in interim housing held steady at 20,363, the rise in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness coincided with the overall increase in the PIT Count.

"The homeless count results tell us what we already know – that we have a crisis on our streets, and it's getting worse," said Dr. Va Lecia Adams Kellum, Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). "The important thing to take away from today is that for the first time, the city, county, and LAHSA are moving with urgency to house the people living on our streets."

During the press conference, Mayor Karen Bass, Supervisor (and LAHSA Commissioner) Lindsey Horvath, and Chair Wendy Greuel representing the LAHSA Commission joined LAHSA's new CEO Dr. Adams Kellum and discussed how they are working together to address unsheltered homelessness.

"We need to collaborate and coordinate to end unsheltered homelessness. In the past, when we've set goals and dedicated resources to focus on specific populations, like veterans, we saw the numbers drop. We need to apply that mindset to addressing unsheltered homelessness countywide," continued Dr. Adams Kellum. "We are all dedicated to addressing street homelessness. We've already had success with our early efforts, but we need to work together to scale them enough to address this humanitarian crisis."

LAHSA recently released data showing that improvements brought about by several emergency declarations made in L.A. City and County have decreased the time it takes to move someone from the street to interim housing. LAHSA has reduced that timeline to 61 days for the adult population, down nearly half from 110 in early 2021. LAHSA has seen an even stronger improvement with the transition-aged youth (TAY) population, where the amount of time was cut by more than 50%, from 127 days to 59. Not only are placements happening faster, but they are also happening more often – the data shows that these improvements coincide with a nearly 30% increase in interim housing placements.

To ensure LAHSA continues to make systemic improvements to address unsheltered homelessness faster, Dr. Adams Kellum announced the formation of a Multi-Department Crisis Response Team (MDCRT). The MDCRT will internally position LAHSA to better partner with the City and County to implement policies that will reduce unsheltered homelessness, like master and batch

leasing, scaling up the leasing process, expanding housing navigation, and ensuring document readiness among people experiencing homelessness. The MDCRT can potentially cut the number of days it takes to move someone inside down to the tens.

Earlier this month, Mayor Bass announced that in the first six months of her administration, more than 14,000 people moved from L.A.'s streets to interim or permanent housing, with over 4,300 obtaining permanent housing. More than 1,300 of those placements came through the mayor's Inside Safe program. The homeless count was conducted before Inside Safe began operating at full capacity. Mayor Bass stated that the numbers reinforce the reality that more work to end unsheltered homelessness lies ahead.

"The data gathered in January represents the crisis our city faces. The challenge before us is vast but we will continue to work with urgency to bring Angelenos inside. I want to thank Dr. Adams Kellum and the LAHSA team for providing this assessment. We must sustain our momentum by locking arms with leaders at every level of government as we confront this crisis as the emergency that it is. Lives depend on it." The County of Los Angeles also declared a state of emergency in early 2023 and is working to launch efforts to end unsheltered homelessness in areas outside of Los Angeles.

"Today's announcement confirms why we are in a state of emergency: more Angelenos continue falling into homelessness than we are able to house," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath. "Over the last six months, we have proven that our unified approach is connecting more people to housing and services. Now we must address the root causes of homelessness by investing in families; working to make housing more affordable; and, most importantly, keep people in the places they already call home."

While L.A.'s homelessness response leaders work together to end street homelessness, they all agree that more must be done to address the root causes of homelessness. A recent study by UC San Francisco's Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative cited unaffordable rents as the leading cause of homelessness among Californians, with half of the study participants saying they received a five-day or fewer warning before losing their homes.

"This year's rise in homelessness is part of a national and regional trend, suggesting that the sustained housing crisis and the end of COVID safety net protections have had an effect," said Wendy Greuel, Chair of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Commission. "The good news is that Los Angeles now has the leadership necessary to buck this trend. I along with Commissioners Waggoner, Chinchilla, Perez, Saunders, Bales, Pearson, and Muro stand with Mayor Bass and Supervisor Horvath in our belief that we need to address the core causes of homelessness. We need to invest in more housing. We need expand prevention across all systems."

The City and the County are on track to create approximately 8,200 affordable homes this year, but all of the leaders acknowledge the need for more affordable housing. They pointed to Measure ULA and the upcoming L.A. County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency (LACAHS) as mechanisms that can potentially help people stay in their homes and increase affordable housing development. Mayor Bass also touted her efforts to speed up the development process for affordable housing within Los Angeles.

An increase in affordable housing could help increase the number of annual permanent housing placements. LAHSA reported that, in coordination with its partners, it made 22,540 placements in 2022. This marks the fifth consecutive year since the implementation of Measure H, that the homeless rehousing system made over 20,000 permanent housing placements.