LETTER TO LA CITY COUNCIL RE: 41.18

Dear Los Angeles City Councilmembers Martinez, Blumenfield, Bonin, Buscaino, Cedillo, De Leon, Harris-Dawson, Koretz, Krekorian, Lee, O'Farrell, Price, Rodriguez, Ryu, and Wesson,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, are requesting that you oppose any legislation that allows the city to ban sitting, sleeping, and lying: within 500 feet of freeways, ramps, and tunnels; within 500 feet of any facility opened after January 2018 that provides housing, shelter, services, safe parking, or storage to unhoused people; or that criminalizes storage of property in the areas listed above. We also request that you oppose legislation criminalizing the refusal of offers of shelter by city employees.

The proposed changes would make it illegal to be unhoused in a significant portion of Los Angeles City, as demonstrated by this interactive map of comprehensive enforcement restrictions. According to Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) data, this could impact thousands of unsheltered individuals living in Los Angeles. It would also make it illegal to refuse an offer of shelter by the city in public spaces citywide. Under these rules, homeless people can be sentenced to six months in prison for simply having property in public spaces.

Public officials have stated over and over again that there are not enough available beds to support Los Angeles' unhoused populations. LAHSA's most recent Housing Inventory Count estimated that there were 15,000 shelter or bridge beds available across the Continuum of Care. Even if all of these beds were open, they would only provide space for a fraction of the people living unsheltered in the city. Further, even if there were sufficient beds, public officials, most notably LAHSA, consistently state that inflow into homelessness is far greater and faster than what our homelessness service system can support. Proposals like these promote the myth that people are homeless by choice, not the result of a failure to expand the city's homeless housing stock (both shelters and permanent). Given this scarcity, prioritizing enforcement will do little more than move people from place to place, disrupting their lives along the way.

The focus of this legislation is to criminalize homelessness, a strategy that wastes millions of city dollars while accomplishing very little. Legal scholars have argued that these ordinances constitute cruel and unusual punishment and violate basic human rights. *Jones v. City of Los Angeles* ruled that enforcing the bans on sitting and sleeping in public violate the Eighth Amendment's cruel and unusual punishment clause. Despite these rulings, Los Angeles has continued to lead with criminalization in its response to the homelessness crisis. This is actively counterproductive toward reducing homelessness.

- Citations, arrests, and fees are impediments to obtaining employment, housing, and other needed resources.
- Displacing people can disrupt relationships with homeless outreach and caseworkers, who are necessary to enter into stable housing and services.
- Encampment sweeps by police and sanitation workers result in the loss of important possessions: documents, items of personal value, even medication.
- When documents are confiscated, people applying for housing and other services are set back—ID cards and certain forms are often needed to obtain assistance.
- When medications are confiscated or thrown out by police, the consequences can be fatal.

As of September 21, coroner data shows that **964 unhoused Angelenos have died this year**.

- Unhoused deaths represent 11% of all deaths in LA, despite representing 1% of the overall population.
- Unhoused deaths were almost twice as likely to be male and 1.6 times more likely to be black.
- Unhoused people were over two times more likely to have died from accidental and preventable causes compared to housed populations.

The Centers for Disease Control states "clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread." Increased enforcement creates another threat to unhoused Angelenos at a time when the city is already expected to surpass the number of unhoused deaths of the previous year and set a record for the **City with the highest homeless mortality rate**.

City Council is approaching enforcement with urgency, even as housing projects face delays and higher-than-expected costs. We cannot prioritize building systems to force people into shelter when there is nowhere for them to go. **For the above reasons, we urge you to oppose the passage of Council file: 20-1376.**

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ENDORSING ORGANIZATIONS

KTOWN FOR ALL

LENS CO

YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE FRONT
YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE FRONT
YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE FRONT
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YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE FRONT
YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE FRONT

GROUND GAME LA

Venice Community Housing

Venice Family Clinic

TENANTS · LAW · ASSOCIATION · UCLA · PEOPLE OVER PROFITS

WP4BL WHITE PEOPLE 4 BLACK LIVES

WOMEN ORGANIZING WORKS RESOURCES KNOWLEDGE + SERVICES

Democratic Socialists of America Los Angeles

STREET WATCH LA

WRAP WESTERN REGIONAL ADVOCACY PROJECT www.wraphome.org

ABUNDANT HOUSING LA HOUSING FOR ALL

trade show temps

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CODEPINK WOMEN FOR PEACE

invisible PEOPLE

UNITED COALITION EAST

ACS AMERICAN CONSTITUTION SOCIETY at UCLA Law

UCLA LUSKIN INSTITUTE ON INEQUALITY AND DEMOCRACY ORGANIZED 2016

ACLU Southern California

POWER People Organized for Westside Renewal

West Valley People's Alliance

HOMELESS HEALTH CARE LOS ANGELES

EVA

NOHO HOME ALLIANCE housing & healthy community for all

VALLEY BETH SHALOM

act·LA Housing Jobs & Transit for All

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Reach out to hello@findyourlens.co for correspondence.