



Board of Supervisors

Nathan A. Miley

PRESIDENT

Supervisor, District 4

September 19, 2023

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Alameda  
1221 Oak Street, Suite 536  
Oakland, Ca. 94612

Dear Board Members:

**SUBJECT: ADOPT A COUNTYWIDE STATE OF EMERGENCY ON HOMELESSNESS**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve a Countywide State of Emergency on Homelessness and direct the Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) Office of Homeless Care and Coordination (OHCC) to lead the development of an emergency response to homelessness and report back to the Board of Supervisors with recommendations within 60 days.

**DISCUSSION:**

As of early 2022, Alameda County had at least 9,747 unhoused residents on a single night, including 73% (7,135) who were unsheltered. This crisis has significantly accelerated over the last decade. Since 2017, the number of unhoused individuals in Alameda County has increased from 5,629 to 9,747 (73% increase) and will likely continue to increase dramatically should we fail to take urgent action. Alameda County is in the midst of a homelessness crisis.

In Alameda County, more than 40% of people experiencing homelessness surveyed during the 2022 Point-in-Time count said they have at least one permanent disability, and 64% of unsheltered respondents were chronically homeless. For people receiving Social Security Disability benefits in California, the maximum grant is \$1,033, far less than the market rent for a studio apartment, at \$1,583. This gap has resulted in a disproportionate number of disabled individuals being forced into homelessness, with no means to remedy the situations.

A recent Stanford University study titled Homelessness in California: Causes and Policy Considerations highlighted rent barriers in the Bay Area:

*The median rent for a two-bedroom apartment is well over \$3,000 in the Bay Area; more than twice as much as the national average of \$1,200. In more than two-thirds of California's ZIP codes, families are "rent-burdened" as they spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent (ABC 2021). High housing costs and a low stock of affordable housing create a precarious situation, especially for lower-income families and individuals who are at higher risk of becoming homeless.*

Because of the acutely high rent burden in the Bay Area, one-time events such as disputes with roommates or family members, job loss, medical events or conditions often lead individuals to become unhoused.

The impacts of homelessness on an individual are devastating, due to increased exposure to trauma, narcotics, violence, and more. According to the Alameda County 2021 Homeless Mortality Report, the number of annual homeless deaths grew considerably larger between 2018 and 2020 and remained at a very high level in 2021. Between 2018 and 2021, 1,157 Alameda County residents died while experiencing homelessness.

In 2021, the age-adjusted mortality rate for people experiencing homelessness in Alameda County was 5.8 times that of the general population of Alameda County. For all causes of death, mortality rates are many times higher for people experiencing homelessness than the general population. In 2021:

- Sixty-six percent (229 out of 346) of all homeless deaths took place outside of a medical setting (i.e., hospital or nursing facility), occurring on streets/sidewalks, outdoors, in vehicles, encampments, shelters, other's residences and other locations.
- Half of homeless acute/chronic disease-related deaths (77 out of 153) occurred in "unattended" settings.
- African American/Black persons represent 41% of total homeless deaths, compared to 19% of general population deaths and 11% of the general population.
- Men represent 75.6% of homeless deaths, compared to 52.7% of general population deaths.

The reasons people enter homelessness are complex and pervasive, and the impacts on individuals and communities are devastating and profound. Therefore, the approach to resolving homelessness must be robust and multifaceted. An emergency response will require the County and all cities within the County to join forces as each entity is responsible for different aspects of the solution. The County is primarily responsible for coordinating the response and for health and social services. The Cities are responsible for land use, planning and basic City services such as public works. In Alameda County, the roles of the cities vary, with Oakland and Fremont providing additional social services and Berkeley hosting its own health jurisdiction. To coordinate services and resources, the County and City representatives meet frequently. While the jointly adopted Home Together 2026 Community Plan, a \$2.5 billion investment strategy focused on shelter, housing and rental assistance, outlined a variety of urgent recommendations, including strengthening coordination and capacity to deliver housing and other resources more efficiently, an Emergency Declaration is necessary to expedite and focus resources on implementation and scaling of the response.

Alameda County may proclaim a local emergency when there are conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the territorial limits of the County, and when these conditions are, or are likely to be, beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of the County and require the combined forces of other political subdivisions to combat. Homelessness meets these requirements for a local emergency. Conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons exist based on the extreme conditions of homelessness in Alameda County.

Homelessness is a complicated and a multifaceted issue that requires coordination, collaboration, and the combined forces of different jurisdictions to alleviate the current state of homelessness. Thus, it is necessary for Alameda County to proclaim a local emergency regarding homelessness.

The County provides critical services to unhoused individuals, including housing navigation, coordinated entry services, general health, behavioral health, and substance abuse treatment services. All of these services are an important part of the overall response to homelessness. Many of these services, provided by the Office of Homeless Care and Coordination (OHCC) and other County partners, have been working effectively. Even so, the scale and speed at which the crisis is spreading demands an expedited expansion of services and scaling up of the response as resources allow.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Proclaiming a local State of Emergency on Homelessness, pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act (Gov. Code §§ 8550 et seq.), to address this crisis will provide the County with additional tools to accelerate and expand its response through Home Together and in collaboration with our city and non-profit partners.

These additional tools could include, but are not limited to:

- accelerated hiring of additional employees to address homelessness and behavioral health needs,
- more effective and efficient use of funds,
- expedited procurement of critical items,
- faster and more streamlined creation of housing,
- expanded services,
- the ability to request additional resources from the State and Federal governments.

The Health Care Services Agency Office of Homeless Care and Coordination (OHCC) is the central coordinating body for Alameda County's efforts to expand and enhance the homelessness response system. The response to other declared emergencies, such as natural disasters, would typically be led by the Alameda County Office of Emergency Services however, the OHCC is best suited to lead the overall coordination of the emergency response for this declaration based on subject matter expertise and existing resource management.

**BUDGET:**

The action taken today will have no impact on the budget.

**FINANCING:**

No financing is necessary to support today's action.

**VISION 2026:**

The declaration of a State of Emergency on Homelessness is essential to the Vision 2026 10X Goal of Eliminating Homelessness and supports the Elimination of Poverty and Hunger and Healthcare for All.

Respectfully submitted,



NATE MILEY  
President  
Alameda County Board of Supervisors

Cc:

Susan Muranishi, County Administrator  
Donna Ziegler, County Counsel  
Melissa Wilk, Auditor-Controller

**THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA,  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**RESOLUTION NUMBER R-\_\_\_\_\_**

**A RESOLUTION DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY ON  
HOMELESSNESS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY**

WHEREAS, as of early 2022, Alameda County had at least 9,747 unhoused residents on a single night, including 73% (7,135) that were unsheltered; and

WHEREAS, the homeless crisis has significantly accelerated over the last decade. Since 2017, the number of unhoused individuals in Alameda County has increased from 5,629 to 9,747 (73% increase) and will likely continue to increase dramatically should we fail to take urgent action; and

WHEREAS, in Alameda County more than 40% of people experiencing homelessness surveyed during the 2022 Point-in-Time count said they have at least one permanent disability, and people receiving Social Security Disability benefits in California receive a maximum of \$1,033 per month, far less than the market rent for a studio apartment, which is \$1,583; and

WHEREAS, this gap has resulted in a disproportionate number of disabled individuals being forced into homelessness, with no means to remedy or improve their situations; and

WHEREAS, the acutely high rent burden in the Bay Area makes one-time events such as disputes with roommates or family members, job loss, medical events or conditions more likely to lead individuals to become unhoused; and

WHEREAS, the trauma associated with becoming homeless, not having a stable place to live, sleep, eat or feel safe, results in an increased likelihood of unhoused persons experiencing mental health crisis, which are exacerbated by their increased exposure to unsafe and inhumane circumstances, including access to narcotics and exposure to crime and violence; and

WHEREAS, between 2018 and 2021, 1,157 Alameda County residents died while experiencing homelessness and, for all causes of death, mortality rates are many times higher for people experiencing homelessness than the general population; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, the age-adjusted mortality rate for people experiencing homelessness in Alameda County was 5.8 times that of the general population of Alameda County. For all causes of death, mortality rates are many times higher for people experiencing homelessness than the general population, and

WHEREAS, sixty-six percent (229 out of 346) of all Alameda County homeless deaths in 2021 took place outside of a medical setting (i.e., hospital or nursing facility), occurring on streets/sidewalks, outdoors, in vehicles, encampments, shelters, other's residences and other locations, and

WHEREAS, half of homeless acute/chronic disease-related deaths (77 out of 153) occurred in "unattended" settings, and

WHEREAS, African-American/Black persons represent 41% of total homeless deaths, compared to 19% of general population deaths and 11% of the general population, and

WHEREAS, these factors combine to create significant barriers to becoming housed after a person enters homelessness; and

WHEREAS, exposure to homelessness, especially at the scale seen in Alameda County, significantly reduces the quality of life for all residents, especially those experiencing displacement; and

WHEREAS, homelessness is a complicated and multifaceted issue that requires, coordination, collaboration, and the combined forces of numerous jurisdictions to adequately address;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Board of Supervisors of the County of Alameda, State of California formally declare a State of Emergency on Homelessness, pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act (Gov. Code §§ 8550 et seq.), and direct the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency Office of Homeless Care and Coordination to lead the development of an emergency response to homelessness and report back to the Board of Supervisors with recommendations in 60 days.

Adopted by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Alameda, State of California,  
on September 19th, 2023 by the following called vote:

AYES:

NOES:

EXCUSED:

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Nate Miley  
President of the Board of Supervisors of the  
County of Alameda, State of California

ATTEST:  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors,  
County of Alameda, State of California

APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
Donna Ziegler, County Counsel

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
—

By:   
K. Scott Dickey, Assistant County Counsel