



LA Alliance for Human Rights sues City and County of Los Angeles to require thousands of beds for homeless Angelenos

**By embracing the recommendation of the Governor's Task Force
thousands of homeless could be sheltered within months**

March 10, 2020 – The LA Alliance for Human Rights, a grassroots group of community members, including homeless and formerly homeless individuals, has filed suit against the City and the County of Los Angeles to establish a legally enforceable mandate to provide thousands of beds for our unsheltered neighbors and fulfill the City and County's respective obligations to provide clean and safe streets for all. The Alliance filed suit after spending several months attempting to negotiate a settlement with the City and the County.

"Drugs, disease, death, and despair have become defining features of many neighborhoods in Los Angeles. There's no excuse for the status quo," said Elizabeth Mitchell, an attorney with Spertus, Landes, & Umhofer, who represents the Alliance and who previously served in the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office. "This suit is intended to catalyze change. If we entered into an agreement today, thousands of beds could be available by Thanksgiving. The longer we litigate, the more lives will be lost."

The City and County have failed to comprehensively address a homelessness crisis that has left over 60,000 people living unsheltered on the streets. They have committed tremendous resources to the crisis, but their chosen options help too few, are too expensive, and take too long. People are dying while the problem outpaces the solutions. Because of this collective failure, Angelenos are confronted with public health risks, blocked sidewalks, untreated mental illness and addiction, environmental hazards, increased crime, and squalor, which affects the housed and unhoused alike. The issues collectively constitute violations of Due Process and Equal Protection, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), inverse condemnation, and nuisance.

"For the safety and well-being of the 60,000 unsheltered Angelenos and the millions of housed, the Alliance is demanding that the City and County begin working together to identify sites, sources of funding, and plans for an additional 22,000 beds to be ready in a matter of months," Mitchell said. "This can be achieved utilizing government properties and a combination of shared housing, sprung structures, tiny houses, tents, inexpensive 3D printed homes, and other financially feasible options that enable rapid sheltering along with wrap-around services to empower those experiencing homelessness to reintegrate with their communities."

This approach is directly in line with the Governor's Homelessness Task Force's recommendation of a "legally enforceable mandate" to reduce homelessness. The Alliance is also seeking to compel both the City and County to create and implement deadline-driven plans for encampment reduction, including significant outreach by teams of social, medical, and mental health workers, so that no person in modern day Los Angeles is left to live and die in the streets. A court-ordered mandate is necessary to galvanize swift action; every other method has failed to date.

"We understand that when it comes to addressing homelessness, ideological opposition, out-of-date state laws, and restrictive legal settlements have slowed the pace of progress," Mitchell stated. "But we can't be bound by good intentions and bad decisions if it results in lives shattered and lost. The first step to healing our community and all of its members is to get people off the streets so they can start getting the help they need."

About LA Alliance for Human Rights

The LA Alliance for Human Rights formed last summer when residents of downtown became so saddened by the suffering around them that they looked to find new ways to break through the barriers. The Alliance includes the plaintiffs in the lawsuit as well as other community members and supporters. After determining that litigation offered the best approach, the group retained counsel and began fundraising. After receiving over 100 donations and spending several months meeting with officials and attorneys from the City and County in an effort to avoid either party having to expend public resources litigating this case, the Alliance has filed suit today because the time has come to stop making excuses and start restoring our community. For more information, visit www.la-alliance.org.