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Governor Schwarzenegger Eliminates Critical Homeless Funding from Budget

Cuts to Impact Winter Shelters, Other LA Programs

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) today criticized Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's elimination of funding for the Emergency Housing and Assistance Program (EHAP) from the 2008-2009 state budget. Without replacement funding, homeless programs throughout the state may be forced to eliminate beds and otherwise scale back services. LAHSA joins housing and homeless advocates across the state in protesting the Governor's action.

EHAP is California's primary source of funding for emergency and transitional housing programs for homeless individuals and families. It provides money for basic operational costs, including rent, utilities, maintenance and on-site supportive services. EHAP has funded 116 programs statewide at a rate of \$4 million per year. Approximately \$1 million goes to thirty programs serving the City & County of Los Angeles.

The Governor's unexpected veto came in the wake of this year's historic budget stalemate. Citing the state's financial crisis, he used his line-item veto power to eliminate funding for a variety of housing and human services programs. In addition to EHAP, other de-funded programs include a state tax credit that helps seniors pay their rent, and funding for state safety inspections of farmworker housing.

"Governor Schwarzenegger has done a great disservice to the families and individuals who rely on these emergency and transitional housing programs," said Rebecca Isaacs, Executive Director of LAHSA. "These people are facing significant challenges, such as job loss, eviction, domestic violence, and mental illness. While the \$4 million of EHAP funding represents only a tiny portion of the state budget, its impact on the homeless Californians is enormous."

A substantial portion of EHAP funds have supported LAHSA's Winter Shelter Program (WSP). The WSP supplements the City & County's shelter system by adding 1,700 seasonal beds, serving 8,617 homeless individuals and 359 homeless families over the course of three and a half months. LAHSA has used its EHAP grant of \$123,000 a year to rent National Guard Armories for use as shelters. Last year, armories in Culver City, West Los Angeles, Burbank and Sylmar provided a combined 585 beds, representing about 35% of the WSP. Without funding to pay for the armories, LAHSA may have to eliminate these beds for the 2009-2010 Winter Shelter season.

“The Winter Shelter Program is a lifeline for our most vulnerable individuals and families during the coldest and wettest months of the year,” Isaacs said. “While Los Angeles County doesn’t experience months of ice and snow, our winter months bring rain and low nighttime temperatures. For those without adequate shelter, these conditions can be painful, dangerous, and sometimes deadly. Reducing the capacity of the program will be devastating for this fragile population.”

LAHSA will continue to work with Housing California, a statewide nonprofit representing a coalition of housing and homeless advocates, to persuade the State Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger to restore funding for EHAP in 2009. To speak with a LAHSA representative about EHAP funding cuts and/or the Winter Shelter Program, please contact Syd Peterson at speterson@lahsa.org or 213.689.4094.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) is a joint powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles, created in 1993 to address the problems of homelessness in Los Angeles County. LAHSA plans, funds and administers programs that assist homeless individuals and families in their transition to permanent housing. LAHSA is the lead agency in the HUD-funded Los Angeles Continuum of Care, and coordinates and manages over \$70 million dollars annually in federal, state, county and city funds for programs providing shelter, housing and services to homeless persons. Additionally, LAHSA partners with the city and the county to integrate services and housing opportunities to ensure wide distribution of service and housing options. LAHSA funds agencies that address many underserved homeless populations including battered women and their children, persons struggling with chronic homelessness, veterans, youth transitioning from foster care, and individuals with mental health needs. For more information, please see <http://www.lahsa.org>

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