March 22, 2019

Assemblymember Eloise Gomez Reyes
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Assembly Bill 307 (Reyes)

Dear Assemblymember Reyes,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Commission (LAHSA), we write in support of Assembly Bill 307 (AB 307), which provides $100 million annually in grant funding for housing programs and supportive services for youth experiencing homelessness.

LAHSA is a joint powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles and serves as the lead agency in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC). LAHSA is responsible for funding a significant portion of the interim housing, permanent housing, and supportive services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County.

On any given night, there are roughly 3,300 youth experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County.1 Just under half, or 1,567, are unsheltered. While the Los Angeles community has placed more young people into housing than ever before, the high rate of unsheltered homelessness reflects the severe shortage of youth resources available to meet the outsized demand. AB 307 would build on two recent state commitments to prioritizing youth homelessness: last year’s SB 918 (Wiener) and dedicated youth funding under the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP). This new grant program ensures that these burgeoning efforts are backed with dedicated, ongoing resources to fund a variety of housing programs and the necessary supportive services to prevent youth from falling into homelessness with flexibility to quickly intervene with appropriate supports when they do.

Targeted prevention and interventions are critical to addressing homelessness across populations, but particularly for youth where bouts of homelessness can have adverse and long-term developmental effects. Within the youth population, we see poorer physical and mental health outcomes, a higher prevalence of substance use, and greater risks of chronic homelessness as they reach adulthood. This bill recognizes that what causes young people to face a housing crisis vastly differs from other adults and requires different levels of intervention and housing options to support their needs. Young people experiencing homelessness face higher rates of involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, family conflict and isolation, and other forms of childhood trauma that require sensitive and culturally appropriate approaches to service delivery that can stabilize their housing and put them on a path toward self-sufficiency.

We strongly support and applaud the preference for youth providers with connections to the local continuum of care and participation in a coordinated entry system. Here in Los

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Angeles County, we are seeing firsthand the promise of collaborative approaches to youth homelessness that align the work of youth service providers and County partners, and are supported by dedicated, ongoing funding commitments for youth-specific housing and services. In 2017 alone, 1,732 young people in the LA CoC were placed into housing, a 43 percent increase from the year prior and nearly twice the number of placements from 2015. As the state begins to coordinate its efforts around youth homelessness, AB 307 is instrumental in supporting regional service delivery systems carry that work through.

Lastly, we appreciate the author’s decision to increase the allowable use for program administration from five to ten percent. In Los Angeles County, a five percent cap makes it challenging for administrative entities to operate programming, meet intended outcomes, and provide needed oversight. Lifting this cap to ten percent aligns the rate with other state-funded homelessness capital programs like the No Place Like Home program and also provides needed capacity to smaller continuums of care; this increased administrative rate will yield improved program effectiveness.

We appreciate the state’s commitment to prioritizing youth homelessness and stand committed to working in partnership to ensure that youth have access to safe, stable housing options.

Sincerely,

Kelli Bernard
Chair, LAHSA Commission

Peter Lynn
Executive Director