January 24, 2018

David W. Louie  
Chair, Regional Planning Commission  
County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Support for Proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance

Dear Commissioner Louie,

I am writing on behalf of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to express support for the proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance. We believe this regulation change will help create a more diverse housing stock in the Unincorporated Areas of Los Angeles County and lead to greater affordability overall. Additionally, we believe this ordinance would be a strong model for cities within Los Angeles County that are considering their own ADU ordinances.

Los Angeles has a dire need for more housing options, especially those that have lower construction costs and may therefore be more affordable to a wider range of individuals. According to the 2017 Homeless Count, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County rose to 57,794 in 2017, a 23% increase from the previous year. Many more continue to be at risk of homelessness, as nearly 30% of renter households in Los Angeles County paid over half of their income on housing in 2016; this represents nearly 550,000 households that are severely burdened by housing costs.¹

Different areas of Los Angeles County will be adding affordable housing units over the coming months and years. The City of Los Angeles will be building thousands of permanent supportive housing (PSH) units using funding from Proposition HHH, while the County will provide annual funding for affordable housing as it builds to an annual $100 million allocation to construct and preserve affordable units. Additional funding from the State of California as part of SB-2 will add even more units. These units are essential to ending our housing crisis, as they provide long-term stability and affordability.

But these units will take time to construct and will be expensive build; the cost of building a new affordable housing unit can be up to $450,000 per unit.² Los Angeles County and other municipalities must deliver units in other expeditious and cost-effective ways in the interim. ADUs present precisely this opportunity, as the cost of developing an ADU ranges from $25,000 to $150,000 per unit.

¹ 2016 American Community Survey One-Year Estimates.  
Moreover, reforming and expediting the process by which ADUs are developed presents future opportunities in relation to the County’s ADU pilot program. This pilot program is in alignment with the County’s Approved Strategies to Combat Homelessness, Strategy F4: Development of Second Units Dwelling Pilot Program and explores possibilities for using ADUs as a form of supportive housing for individuals and families. Should this pilot prove successful, Los Angeles County will have the possibility of expanding this program to serve many more households. A well-designed ADU ordinance is a necessary pre-requisite to the expansion of the ADU pilot program, by creating the opportunity for more units that can be used for supportive housing in the future.

LAHSA applauds this well-measured ordinance to create more housing units quickly, safely, and efficiently and believe this ordinance creates a pathway to build and permit more units at a lower cost. The ADU ordinance would accomplish this by eliminating parking requirements for these types of units; parking requirements can put the construction costs of an ADU out of reach for many homeowners—by removing these requirements it makes ADU construction a feasible option. In addition, LAHSA appreciates the permitted size range of 150 to 1,200 square feet. This range will also assist Unincorporated Areas to create a diversity of housing stock and avoid minimum lot requirements which can increase the cost of housing and make units less affordable.³

Finally, we are appreciative of the care with which this ordinance has been crafted given the fragile ecology of Los Angeles County. As we saw throughout 2017, several areas within Los Angeles County are at-risk of wildfires that can have devastating consequences, including displacing vulnerable people from their homes. We therefore support the County’s efforts to restrict ADUs in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs). This ordinance, and the County’s design with regards to VHFHSZs, demonstrates a commitment to the safety of residents and neighborhoods.

We support the Department of Regional Planning and the Regional Planning Commission’s efforts to move an effective ordinance forward and are happy to assist in efforts to create more affordable and low-cost housing options for the people of Los Angeles County.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Lynn
Executive Director