December 15, 2017

Councilmember Jose Huizar
Chair, Planning and Land Use Management Committee
200 North Spring Street, Room 465
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Support for Permanent Supportive Housing Ordinance

Dear Councilmember Huizar,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), I write in strong support of the proposed Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) ordinance.

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 (LACoC). 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.

According to the 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, there are 34,189 people experiencing homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, a 20% increase from 2016. Many of these persons experience chronic homelessness (10,617), substance abuse (6,321), serious mental illness (10,294), developmental disability (2,104), and/or a physical disability (5,894). PSH is critical to effectively serve persons experiencing chronic homelessness. By coupling a stable housing unit with supportive services tailored to the individual’s needs, PSH units are able to simultaneously lift an individual out of homelessness and provide them with supportive services.

The residents of the City of Los Angeles took unprecedented action by passing Proposition HHH in November 2016, providing $1.2 billion in housing bonds to build 10,000 new PSH and affordable housing units over the next 10 years. Proposition HHH marked a significant step toward providing relief for the many people and families experiencing homelessness in the City of Los Angeles.

At present, the City produces about 300 new permanent supportive housing (PSH) units per year, which falls far short of the 1,000 units that Los Angeles must produce per year as established by Proposition HHH. While funding from Proposition HHH will help accelerate the production of PSH units, funding alone will not allow the City to reach its goals; other reforms are needed.

The PSH ordinance, if passed, will maximize the number of PSH units built by reducing requirements for parking spaces to allow a larger proportion of resources to be directed towards building actual housing units. Studies show that parking requirements add
considerable costs to projects and can increase overall development cost by approximately 12.5% per unit. By reducing these costs, the ordinance will allow existing resources to be invested towards creating more PSH units. Moreover, by requiring PSH projects to be located within High Quality Transit Areas with a range of public transit options, this ordinance ensures that new developments will maximize existing public transit infrastructure.

We also applaud that the ordinance will streamline the approval process for qualifying PSH projects by allowing certain changes to developments to be “on-menu” incentives. This reform will allow developers to avoid the time-intensive zone change process, except in cases where the development does not conform to existing zoning. Both this change, and the increase in the unit threshold for site plan review, will allow developers to avoid costly delays that can last over 12 months and make projects more difficult to complete.

The PSH ordinance makes creating more housing for the most vulnerable a true priority, devoting not just resources but the structural changes needed to ensure we meet the goals that voters set for us when they approved Measure HHH. A forthcoming agreement between the City, County of Los Angeles, and Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles will guarantee that the PSH units developed by the City will be accompanied by the critical wrap-around supportive services that make PSH a successful model.

We stand committed in partnership with the City to create a streamlined process to build the PSH units necessary to provide timely housing for people and families experiencing homelessness and doing so in a thoughtful manner that takes communities’ needs into account. We look forward to continuing to work together to support this effort.

Sincerely,

Noah Farkas  
Commission Chair

Peter Lynn  
Executive Director

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