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 Interim Motel Conversion Ordinance

Dear Councilmember Huizar,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), I write in strong support of the proposed Interim Motel Conversion (IMC) 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.

We believe that the proposed IMC ordinance is an important step to capitalize on existing hotel and motel structures in response to the immediate need for transitional and supportive housing in alignment with City Homeless Strategy 7C, “Expand Adaptive Reuse for Homeless Housing.” Repurposing hotel and motel rooms to provide supportive and transitional housing provides an immediate solution to housing shortages by addressing the zoning and permitting barriers that potential conversion projects may encounter.

According to the 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, there are 34,189 people experiencing homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, nearly a third (31%) of whom experience chronic homelessness. These individuals experience conditions which do not allow them to sustain housing without supportive services to complement their housing. The number of individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness saw an alarming increase of 24% from 2016 to 2017.

Last November, the City of Los Angeles voters resoundingly supported Proposition HHH, a $1.2 billion bond measure that aims to build 10,000 new permanent supportive housing units in the next 10 years. The passage of Proposition HHH marked a strong commitment from the City and its voters to provide safe and supportive housing for Los Angeles’ most vulnerable. However, construction of these units will take time, and persons experiencing homelessness need assistance immediately. As such, Proposition HHH must be paired with policies that deliver housing solutions quickly.
The IMC ordinance is an effort to do just that, pursuing the short-term creation of supportive housing units without necessitating new construction or altering the landscapes of Los Angeles’ communities. We applaud the ordinance’s proposal to allow motels and hotels to provide supportive services without seeking a zone change. In addition, we commend the ordinance’s proposal to allow hotels and motels to retrofit units to meet guidelines for permanent supportive housing units without requiring a zone change. Taken together, these actions will significantly reduce the cost and timeline of converting motel and hotel units for supportive housing uses.

The adaptive reuse of hotels and motels significantly expands the City’s supply of available transitional and supportive housing units by allowing existing underutilized buildings to meet the extreme demand for housing. Creative, cost-effective strategies like the proposed IMC ordinance are necessary to reach the ambitious yet attainable goals outlined in the City’s Comprehensive Homeless Strategy.

Thank you for your efforts in addressing one of the city’s most critical needs. We stand committed with the City in supportive creative and cost-effective strategies to produce more supportive and transitional housing units.

Sincerely,

Noah Farkas  
Commission Chair

Peter Lynn  
Executive Director