June 18, 2019

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Chair, House Financial Services Committee
2129 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: H.R. 2016 – T. Lieu (CA-33)

Dear Chair Waters,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC), the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) writes in strong support of H.R. 2016, and its companion legislation, S. 974.

LAHSA is a joint-powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles and serves as the lead agency in the 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. LAHSA’s mission is to ensure Angelenos have access to safe and stable housing, as such we support the identification of alternative spaces which can be repurposed to provide safe and accessible bridge housing to our residents experiencing homelessness.

On any given night, over 44,000 individuals experienced unsheltered homelessness in Los Angeles County.1 Unsheltered individuals face numerous threats to their safety and well-being – not only are they more vulnerable to violence and accidents, but they also must contend with life-threatening weather conditions, particularly during the hot summer and cold, wet winter months. According to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, mortality rates for people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County were over two and half times the mortality rates for the general population. Consequently, Los Angeles County faces an urgent need for additional shelter beds.

The Veterans’ Administration (VA) Reservation in West Los Angeles could meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in the form of a year-round shelter. The armory on the premises currently acts as a shelter during the winter months and is an accessible and accommodating location for people experiencing homelessness. H.R. 2016 and S. 974 would provide for a more practical use of space in the VA Reservation by allowing the construction of a year-round bridge housing site in the parking lot adjacent to the armory.

A year-round bridge housing site would provide dormitory style living and would encourage residents to stay onsite while working towards finding permanent housing. While winter shelters are vital tools to protect the health and safety of vulnerable residents, they lack the services and intensive case management to serve as a bridge to connect residents experiencing homelessness with permanent housing solutions. A year-round bridge housing site would provide these connections to lift individuals out of homelessness and into permanent housing.

By giving flexibility to use property at the VA Reservation in West Los Angeles, Congress would be recognizing the growth of unsheltered homelessness in recent years as well as the need for innovative solutions to siting bridge housing expediently.

We support H.R. 2016, and its Senate companion legislation S. 974, for their resourceful and forward-thinking solutions to the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles County and we urge Congress to do the same.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Lynn
Executive Director