November 15, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for H.R.4302 – B. Sherman (CA-30)

Dear Madam Speaker,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC), we write in support of H.R.4302, which would authorize public housing agencies to share data with local CoCs regarding individuals and families who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness for the purposes of coordinating services and housing.

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 combat homelessness and ensure everyone in the LA CoC has access to safe and stable housing. As such, we support H.R.4302 as it would provide coordination and continuity of care for vulnerable persons in the LA CoC, while ensuring the needed protections are in place to safeguard their privacy as well.

In 2018, an estimated 55,000 people fell into homelessness across Los Angeles County, many of them experiencing homelessness for the first time. The high rate of inflow led to an increase of 12% in the County’s total population experiencing homelessness, despite the system having housed more people than ever. Due to the high inflow and the increasing numbers of chronically homeless individuals, coordination of care between systems is imperative. One of the more important relationships is the one between a CoC and the local public housing agencies (PHAs) within the CoC, as PHAs are critical in community efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), communities that have been the most successful in working towards ending homelessness are those where PHAs are working directly with other stakeholders, including – and especially – the local CoC. Coordination of care is extremely important for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, many of whom may have a history of trauma, mental illness, and substance use, and may have a difficult time navigating complex systems and keeping track of past or current service use. Coordination and data sharing between PHAs and CoCs can allow for

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2 Ibid.
information to be exchanged such as a residents’ participation in housing programs and services. CoCs can, conversely, provide PHAs with homeless verification and demonstrate a local need to create a homelessness preference, in which PHAs can then provide the CoC with the outcomes. For example, a CoC may use their Point-in-Time homeless count and Homeless Management Information System data to see that there has been a growth over time in chronically homeless veterans and ask local PHAs to create a preference and prioritize this population. PHAs then, if H.R.4302 goes into effect, would be able to show the outcome data of this preference, keeping CoCs informed of community progress toward preventing and reducing homelessness.

By allowing PHAs to share data with local CoCs regarding their residents who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, H.R.4302 is creating a needed pathway for information sharing which will allow the homeless services system to better serve clients. H.R.4302 would also greatly reduce administrative burden by making policies and procedures around data sharing more explicit and reduce the ambiguity that currently exists.

Not only will this bill allow for data sharing in order to better facilitate housing and supportive services for vulnerable individuals, but it will also do so in a thoughtful way. H.R.4302 includes provisions that will ensure clients are protected from unnecessary intrusions or exposure to enforcement activities. The bill additionally ensures that the protections under the Violence Against Women Act are upheld.

H.R.4302 is a critical piece of legislation which will help fill a gap in the broader homeless services system. Data is necessary to track outcomes as well as informing stakeholders of funding and program needs. For these reasons, we support H.R.4302 due to the positive impact it will have on service coordination, especially in the LA CoC. We thank you for considering this vital piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Sarah Dusseauult
Chair, LAHSA Commission

Peter Lynn
Executive Director