



# NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness Final Report Calls for Immediate Action on 'Unacceptable Status Quo' of Homeless Delivery Systems**

#### ***Voids in Existing Services Identified, Recommendations Highlighted***

LOS ANGELES - After six months of extensive reviews and meetings with hundreds of key stakeholders, the Blue-Ribbon Commission on Homelessness (BRCH) has released a comprehensive 100 plus-page report delineating seven recommendations needed to improve the region's current system that helps people experiencing homelessness.

In response to a [motion](#) introduced by Supervisors Kathryn Barger, Fifth District and Hilda L. Solis, First District and approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor last July, the BRCH, led by Executive Director Mary Wickham, Esq., reviewed the existing governance structures within the region that hold the decision-making authority to meaningfully address and solve the issue of homelessness. They also identified gaps in the County's homeless services delivery system that need to be remedied.

"I am grateful for the significant work the County team, First District Commissioner Sarah Dusseault, and the entire Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness has put into the analysis of the County's homeless delivery system," said Solis. "This is the most comprehensive review ever conducted of what works and doesn't work in our response to homelessness. Through the countless interviews and presentations, the BRCH heard from many stakeholders who are not always prioritized in homeless system decision making. Importantly, I am glad that the BRCH elevated the voices of smaller municipalities throughout the region. It is critical that we work with the unincorporated communities and all 88 cities in the County to find solutions for homelessness, and I am confident that the findings in this report will bring us to a more unified response to the crisis."

"LA County deserves the most informed approach possible for tackling homelessness, grounded in the wealth of knowledge from service providers, cities, and civic organizations across the county. This report puts us on firmer ground, and is a key next step on our path toward securing long-term housing for our unhoused neighbors," said Janice Hahn, Supervisor to the Fourth District.

Supervisor Barger also commented on the importance of the BRCH's report. "Today is an important day for our County. It's apparent that what we're doing to help people out of homelessness is failing terribly. Measure H has taught us that throwing money at a problem doesn't resolve it. Instead, we need a commitment to take a close look at what's working, what's not working, and to fix the systems that are supposed to be in place to quickly and efficiently help people that are struggling and lack a place to call home. The BRCH report is an important first step towards that goal. I look forward to reviewing its recommendations with my colleagues so we can make long overdue changes to how we direct and manage homelessness services in our County."



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The BRCH, Ms. Wickham, and the BRCH support team engaged in hundreds of hours of conversations with interviewees on the above issues, who in turn shared their concerns and recommendations. The result is a final [report](#) informed by approximately 280 individuals representing over 130 entities, cities, departments, and authorities within the County or across the country. Approximately 40 service providers were also interviewed in order to include their invaluable real-world perspectives.

Highlights of the report include the following observations:

- Key government entities and service providers too often operate in silos rather than as an integrated network. As a result, these entities are hampered in supporting persons experiencing homelessness.
- There is no entity dedicated to leading on homelessness in the County of Los Angeles or in the City of Los Angeles. To drive systems, change, there needs to be. While many County and City of Los Angeles departments touch homelessness, none are dedicated exclusively to leading on this issue.
- The governing bodies of the County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles have over-relied on the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and its governing commission, in recent years, for too many matters related to homelessness. However, LAHSA is not empowered to be a decision-maker. This has created confusion and a great deal of consternation for many stakeholders.
- Cities across our region demand more direct access to Measure H funding to address homelessness in their communities in the manner their constituents desire. Simultaneously, there needs to be a balanced distribution of Measure H funds to those areas with the greatest number of persons experiencing homelessness.

Stakeholders who were interviewed all agreed that the region's homelessness services delivery system is not where it needs to be and that the system has not evolved at the pace required to meet the vast need of the most vulnerable who live on our streets.

Highlights of the feedback collected included an urgent need to:

- Embrace wholeheartedly a “whatever it takes” attitude in tackling all the issues that impact homelessness.
- Reject a “one-size-fits-all” approach and recognize that there are as many ways out of homelessness as there are into homelessness and that “the streets cannot be the waiting room for permanent housing”.
- Pivot to a region-wide approach that allows for and incorporates local solutions by partnering with cities and service providers in a more direct manner.
- Allow the various philosophies and approaches identified that help people out of homelessness to coexist in our ecosystem. After all, we are “the largest and most complex Continuum of Care system in the country”.
- Replace rigidity in decision-making with flexibility, lumbering administrative practices and policies with nimbleness, and gridlock in governance with clarity and momentum; and
- Equity must be the bedrock on which any homelessness system is built with the voices of the underrepresented and those with lived experience occupying a large space.

Wickham commented on what the experience has meant to her. “I’m very grateful to the Board for affording me the opportunity to serve as the Executive Director of the BRCH. In this role, I had an opportunity to take a close look at the County’s homelessness delivery system and the governance structures currently in place which impact decision-making over the many issues that touch homelessness,” she said.



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“Those with lived expertise and those who work tirelessly each day to solve homelessness spoke with a clear voice. We have a humanitarian crisis on our streets and the status quo is not acceptable. Something must change. In response, the BRCH has developed a list of pragmatic recommendations and options for the Board of Supervisors to act on. Immediate action is required. There is much more work to do. I am confident in the Board’s commitment to improving the lives of people living on the street and look forward to the Board’s vote on the recommendations.”

To read the full BRCH report, [click here](#). To view a list of frequently asked questions about the BRCH, [click here](#).

## **About the Blue-Ribbon Commission on Homelessness**

On July 27, 2021, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the Blue-Ribbon Commission on Homelessness (BRCH). Its mission was to "conduct a comprehensive study of LAHSA's Governance structure by reviewing existing reports and recommendations, identify and analyze the challenges inherent to the existing system, and to provide recommendations to change and improve its efficiency."

The work of the BRCH was unique in that it was the first public, commission-driven process, authorized and created by the Board, to study homelessness governance. To learn more, visit [BRCH.lacounty.gov](http://BRCH.lacounty.gov).

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