

Dear Madame President,

I write to express my deep concerns about the direction that the Los Angeles City Council (Council) has taken to address the homelessness crisis in the past two weeks concurrent with my absence from Council meetings.

Over the past few months, I spent countless hours working with many of you, department leadership, service providers, and civic organizations, to help shape a Citywide Street Outreach Engagement Strategy that aimed to balance the desire to regulate space on our streets with the opportunity to provide consistent, compassionate and comprehensive services-focused outreach to help transition unhoused individuals across the City into suitable housing.

Over the past two weeks, the Council has begun adopting resolutions to implement Section 41.18 of the municipal code, which will usher in the ability to legally enforce anti-camping restrictions in Council Districts 2, 3, 6 and 15. It is my understanding that additional resolutions from Council Districts 5, 7, 13, and 14 are pending approval.

While the enforcement process is being advanced by the Council, the necessary steps have not been taken to ensure accountability, transparency or effectiveness to demonstrate that the Street Engagement Strategy has been fully implemented before any enforcement is approved at any particular location or locations. If the City cannot clearly show the public that meaningful street engagement took place at each location – and that the offer of suitable housing was made and unsheltered residents at that location have been placed into suitable housing – all of the efforts to implement a balanced approach to address street homelessness will be for naught.

As I have said repeatedly, we will only meaningfully address the homelessness crisis if we pursue the establishment of a Right to Housing – an obligation on government to build a more effective and comprehensive safety net that includes robust homeless prevention efforts, meaningful street engagement, and adequate interim and permanent supportive and affordable housing, coupled with strong supportive services.

Over the past few months, I had been working closely with the City departments, service providers and other stakeholders, to help develop a 5-year Investment Strategy and Action Plan to establish a Right to Housing in the City of Los Angeles. My intention had been to utilize the October 28th Homelessness and Poverty Committee meeting to have a robust discussion on the Right to Housing Investment Strategy and Action Plan, as well as Councilmember De Leon's complementary "25 X 25" initiative that aims to create 25,000 more housing units by 2025, and my proposed Housing Now Fund, which would add 10,000 slots of rental subsidies across the City targeting unsheltered individuals with complex medical and behavioral health needs.

I am disheartened to see that all October Homelessness and Poverty Committee meetings have been cancelled over the past two weeks, including the one that would have occurred today, which creates uncertainty for a variety of supportive housing projects and the timely homeless and housing-related policy discussions, as described above.

Earlier this week, reports from Sacramento indicate that the State anticipates another record-breaking budget surplus next fiscal year. If the City is truly focused on addressing the humanitarian and moral

crisis of our time, it is critical that it advance a comprehensive plan, as envisioned through the Right to Housing 5-Year Investment Strategy and Action Plan, to help advocate for the City's fair share in a strategic manner that can holistically improve conditions for housed and unhoused residents in our communities.

I urge your timely action on this issue – there is simply no time to waste.

With hope,

Mark Ridley-Thomas