



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: February 7, 2023

19

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

In recent years, the County of San Diego (County) has taken on an increasing role in addressing homelessness within the region. Today's action would establish ending veteran homelessness as a policy priority for this Board of Supervisors and direct County staff to work both internally and externally to achieve the goal of ending veteran homelessness in the region.

San Diego is a military community and is home to over 250,000 veterans, one of the nation's largest concentrations.¹ Veterans have dedicated themselves to the greater good of the country, but that service does not guarantee a life of good health and good fortune. Many veterans face difficulties. Veterans may have trouble transitioning to civilian life, finding fruitful careers after service, and receiving the healthcare needed to manage trauma. These issues can cause veterans to struggle and fall into homelessness at disproportionate rates.

The County is actively involved in assisting veterans experiencing homelessness in a variety of programs, but a more comprehensive and urgent approach, including working with outside partners, is needed to accomplish the goal of ending veteran homelessness. Veteran homelessness is a regional issue and should be a priority for our County. We owe it to the people who have dedicated their lives to service for our country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPERVISOR FLETCHER AND CHAIRWOMAN VARGAS

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to create a plan as to what County resources (including additional resources) are necessary to achieve the goal of ending veteran homelessness in San Diego. The plan should include relevant partners and roles and responsibilities for each, including metrics, to quantify progress and ensure accountability, and a timeframe for achievement.

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sandiegocountycalifornia/VET605221#VET605221>

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2. Direct the CAO to work externally with the Regional Task Force on Homelessness, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and community organizations on a regional effort, which include identifying non-County resources, to end veteran homelessness.
3. In accordance with Board Policies M1 and M2, advocate for regulatory, budgetary, and legislative efforts that would end veteran homelessness.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

People of color experience homelessness at disproportionate rates. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 13% of the general population is Black, but Black individuals make up 39% of people experiencing homelessness in the United States. This data is reflected locally. During San Diego's 2022 Point-In-Time Count, 24% of individuals identified as Black or African American, which is nearly five times the proportion of that population in the region. Additionally, 3% of those counted identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, which is nearly three times the rate in the general population. Veterans who have experienced combat are also more likely to be homeless and to report difficulty entering the workforce than nonveteran employees and may need other support and accommodations for those living with service-related disabilities like Post-Traumatic Stress. These difficulties may lead to homelessness. The actions in this Board Letter would lead to veterans being connected to housing and would have beneficial outcomes for people of color experiencing homelessness.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Ending veteran homelessness in San Diego would lead to benefits for the individual veterans assisted but also to positive social and economic enhancements, contributing to the overall sustainability of the region. Veterans have proven qualities that add value to our society. Their selflessness, honor, loyalty, and dedication to the wellbeing of others provide positive social contributions to our communities and therefore, positive social sustainability for our region. Reducing homelessness protects the environmental sustainability and public health of the region by reducing impact to sensitive environmental areas by bringing those who are experiencing homelessness inside, into safe and supported homes.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's recommendations. There may be future fiscal impacts based on recommendations from today's action and any such recommendations would return back for consideration and approval by the Board. Upon return by staff, funding for future costs will need to be identified by the department and will proceed once identified. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

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BACKGROUND

Over the last few years, the County of San Diego (County) has stepped up to address homelessness like never before, but there is still so much work to do. We have seen progress with programs that work to address veteran homelessness, and we know it is possible to end veteran homelessness in San Diego County. Today's action would establish ending veteran homelessness as a policy priority for this Board of Supervisors (Board).

Veterans have dedicated themselves to the greater good of the country, but that service does not guarantee a life of good health and good fortune. For many veterans, there are difficulties. Veterans may have trouble transitioning to civilian life, finding fruitful careers after service, and receiving the healthcare needed to manage trauma. These issues can cause veterans to struggle and fall into homelessness at disproportionate rates.

California is home to a high number of veterans experiencing homelessness. Thirty-two percent of all veterans experiencing homelessness in the United States (10,395 veterans) are in California.² A substantial number of these veterans are within San Diego County. According to San Diego's 2022 Point-In-Time-Count data from the Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH), 686 individuals were veterans experiencing homelessness, over eight percent of the total unhoused individuals in the region.³

The County is currently involved in supporting veterans experiencing homelessness in a variety of ways, notably through the administration of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers, a collaborative program between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) that provides rental assistance to homeless veterans and offers ongoing VA case management and supportive services. Since 2009, the County Housing Authority has helped 1,259 veterans secure stable housing through the VASH program. Additionally, through a partnership between the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) and the Sheriff's Department, the Community Care Coordination for Veterans (C3V) program provides care coordination and housing navigation for justice-involved veterans. On January 24, 2023 (4), the Board authorized an expansion of the C3V program to include justice-involved veterans that are not currently incarcerated and at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The County also offers benefit access and assistance to residents from the Office of Military & Veterans Affairs in addition to other programs throughout the enterprise. We have made progress in San Diego County in addressing veteran homelessness due to the County's work on these programs and in partnership with the VA and community organizations like RTFH. Data shows a 30% decrease among veterans experiencing homelessness in San Diego County from 2020 to 2022.⁴ But a more comprehensive and urgent approach is needed to accomplish the goal of ending veteran homelessness.

In January, Supervisor Fletcher, in partnership with RTFH and members of the local veteran community, announced his intention to end veteran homelessness in San Diego County. This effort will require the convening of community organizations and stakeholders, government representatives from local, state, and federal levels and individuals with lived experience to come

² <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

³ https://www.rtfhsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022-San-Diego-Region-FINAL_05192022-1.pdf

⁴ <https://www.rtfhsd.org/updates/2022-point-in-time-count-data-released/>

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up with a plan of how to make this goal a reality. Once the partners have been convened and a plan has been developed, this group will announce to the community by April 21, 2023, how these results will be achieved. An essential aspect of this work is the active participation of County staff and departments. Today's proposal would direct County staff to work both internally and externally to achieve the goal of ending veteran homelessness in the region.

First, this action directs the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to determine what current programs at the County involve this population, what obstacles currently exist to connect veterans experiencing homelessness to housing, and what County actions and resources are necessary to achieve the goal of ending veteran homelessness in San Diego County. Additionally, this proposal directs the CAO to work externally with RTFH, the VA, and community organizations on a regional effort, which would include non-county resources, to end veteran homelessness.

Veteran homelessness is a regional issue, and it should be a priority for our County. We owe it to the people who have dedicated their lives to service for our country.

We urge your support.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

The proposed action is not a project pursuant to CEQA because it is an administrative action without potential to result in a direct or indirect foreseeable physical change in the environment. CEQA Guidelines § 15378(a). The proposed action is an administrative action to seek feedback and planning for reducing veteran homelessness; any future County action in response to this feedback will receive CEQA review based on the specific action recommended at that future time.

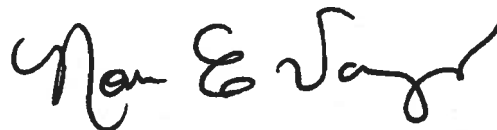
LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action to direct County of San Diego (County) staff to work towards ending veteran homelessness in San Diego County supports the Equity and Community Strategic Initiatives in the County's Fiscal Year 2023-2028 Strategic Plan by connecting veterans to housing and improving the quality of life for the community by supporting individuals who have served.

Respectfully submitted,



NATHAN FLETCHER
Supervisor, District 4



CHAIRWOMAN NORA VARGAS
Supervisor, District 1

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A