



United States Senate

December 11, 2019

The Honorable Ben Carson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Carson:

I write to express my support for Governor Newsom's request for additional housing vouchers to address California's homelessness crisis.

According to your Department's data, more than 130,000 people were identified as experiencing homelessness on any given night in California – and based on recent local data for 2019, we can only expect this number to increase. Those homeless include families with young children who can't afford rising rents; veterans; formerly stable adults faced with unexpected life circumstances, such as losing their jobs or getting sick; victims of domestic violence; those with untreated mental illness; and individuals suffering from substance abuse disorders.

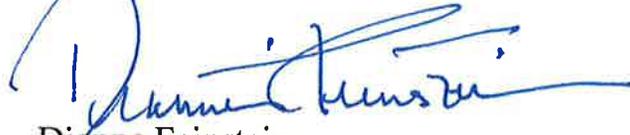
An essential tool in combatting homelessness is housing vouchers, which help low-income Americans find affordable housing. Not only do vouchers sharply reduce homelessness and other financial hardships, but they also lift people out of poverty and give low-income families an opportunity to move to neighborhoods that offer greater opportunity. Additionally, strong investments in housing vouchers have also been found to improve life outcomes for children, reduce overall costs, and end a reliance on other federal assistance programs.

I believe the best and most immediate way that the federal government could help with California's homelessness crisis would be for you to grant Governor Newsom's request in the attached letter for 50,000 more housing vouchers. I also ask you to increase the value of these vouchers to meet higher rental costs in expensive states like California, especially in cities like Bakersfield, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose. Furthermore, I urge you and your

Department to work with landlords to incentivize them to rent to additional voucher recipients.

It is essential that the federal government works collaboratively with California to address homelessness, and I look forward to working with you and your department to devote additional resources to California.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Enclosure: Letter from Governor Newsom to President Trump dated December 5, 2019

DF/bp



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

December 5, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

More than two months ago, I wrote you to offer the state's partnership and request your immediate assistance in addressing California's homelessness emergency. Since then, your Administration has only rebuffed our efforts to partner and has shown no willingness to provide more resources for homeless housing.

The State of California is doing more than ever to confront homelessness and its causes. I dedicated \$1 billion in emergency aid for homelessness in this year's budget. And I recently signed a package of bills to assist city and county governments by removing regulatory barriers to building homeless housing and shelter, as well as to expand our conservatorship programs to assist those with the most intensive mental health issues.

But California cannot solve this national emergency alone. All levels of government – local, state, and federal – need to put skin in the game. It is critical that you provide the emergency housing aid necessary to confront this crisis.

As you contemplate taking executive action on homelessness – as has been reported – I urge you to consider one key, inescapable fact: we cannot solve homelessness without addressing housing.



Any credible solution to this issue must include long-term mental health and housing supports for individuals. What we really need is a deep, sustained federal commitment to Housing First and providing safe places for people to live. Any other approach is a half-measure.

With a single stroke of your pen, you can make major, positive impact on homelessness right away.

You can immediately order your Department of Housing and Urban Development to house 50,000 homeless Californians with federal housing vouchers – this, combined with critically important increases in fair market rents, can stably house a significant portion of our street homeless population faster than almost any other action you could possibly take.

Many of these homeless Californians are veterans of the United States Military. I pledge to work with you to prioritize homeless veterans with these new vouchers that you could provide.

Second, you could halt cuts to public housing and critical programs like the Community Development Block Grant and mental health services. Your recent proposal to slash food stamps could harm the health and well-being of hundreds of thousands of Californians, many of whom may be put at risk for homelessness. When the Federal government reduces economic assistance to the most vulnerable, it exacerbates homelessness and the deep poverty that drives it. You have the power to stop these reductions.

These actions are examples of California's constructive proposals for partnership. As an example of how we can work together, we have been grateful for the partnership and real Federal investments your Administration has provided to address the opioid crisis that is plaguing California and our nation. Moving forward, we can build on these partnerships to reform the behavioral health system and break the cycle of incarceration, instead focusing on healing the most vulnerable among us. And we can provide stable housing beyond interim shelter camps – and actually address the economic and health conditions that trap people in homelessness. But this takes cooperation.

California pledges to do its part. We hope and expect you to do yours.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom
Governor of California

