



September 26, 2022

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway, Suite 335
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Letter of Support for Declaring Homelessness a Public Health Crisis (Item 21)

Dear Chair Fletcher, Vice Chair Vargas, and Honorable Board of Supervisors,

As the voice of Downtown, the Downtown San Diego Partnership supports the declaration of homelessness as a public health crisis for San Diego County. We are committed to supporting solutions-oriented policies that aim to end homelessness not only in Downtown, but across the entire County. With housing always as the end goal, our organization has steadfastly advocated for the deployment of resources to address homelessness in a coordinated, compassionate, and data-driven way.

Recent data from the Downtown Partnership's monthly Downtown Unsheltered and Encampment Count, the experiences of our unhoused care team, and anecdotal feedback from Downtown stakeholders underscores the need for a public health crisis declaration. In August 2022, the monthly count recorded more than 1,600 unsheltered individuals and more than 450 tent encampments in just Downtown – a 9% increase compared to the second-highest month (April) of the calendar year. Our team connects with unhoused clients every week to learn about and help meet their needs. They see firsthand the unsafe, unsanitary, and often inhumane conditions these clients endure. And we hear regularly from residents, business-owners, and the Downtown workforce about the suffering they witness in our streets, sidewalks, and parks.

The County's declaration is an important step to help the region collectively identify and implement resources, personnel, outreach efforts, and other measures. Additionally, we support expanded and enhanced opportunities for local agencies to collaborate and implement innovative strategies quickly to make a difference both for people experiencing homelessness and our communities. Because we know we need a combination of both short-term and long-term solutions at our disposal as a region if we are going to make a measurable impact.

Together we can help make positive progress on the crisis of homelessness. The Downtown Partnership stands ready to help participate in further collaboration between our local jurisdictions, community organizations, service providers, healthcare professionals, and others to develop resources and a comprehensive approach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Brennan".

Betsy Brennan
President & CEO