



UNITED FIREFIGHTERS of LOS ANGELES CITY

Local 112 IAFF AFL-CIO-CLC

April 28, 2025

Honorable Katy Yaroslavsky
Budget, Finance, and Innovation Committee
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Chairwoman Yaroslavsky:

I'm reaching out to you today on behalf of the nearly 3,400 members of United Firefighters of Los Angeles City (UFLAC) regarding Mayor Bass' proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

UFLAC understands that the City is once again facing a major budget deficit and that difficult decisions must be made by our elected leaders. At the same time, we want to be clear that the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) has been understaffed, underfunded, and under-resourced for decades when compared to other large urban cities facing similar challenges.

We appreciate that the Mayor's proposed 2025-26 Budget calls for an increase in funding for the LAFD for a total of \$923 million. This number, however, remains woefully inadequate for a fire department that is tasked with protecting nearly 4 million people with well over 500,000 emergency calls for service each year. It's also significantly less than the \$1.2 billion that former LAFD Chief Crowley requested for 2025-26 in November of last year, two months before the historic Palisades Fire.

For an important point of reference, the San Francisco Fire Department serves a population of 789,000 people, and its current year Fire Department budget is \$531 million. The Seattle Fire Department serves a population of 760,000 people, and its current year fire department budget is about \$327 million. The LAFD serves a population of 3.8 million people, and the Mayor's proposed 2025-26 LAFD Budget is \$923 million.

This equates to an annual investment of \$673 per San Francisco resident for their fire service, \$430 per Seattle resident for their fire service, and \$243 per Los Angeles resident for the LAFD.

These are indisputable, "apples to apples" comparisons of three metropolitan west coast cities that deal with structure fires, a homeless crisis, natural disasters, daily commuters, international tourists, and so much more. The bottom line is that the LAFD continues to be



the most understaffed and underfunded urban fire department in the country, even with the proposed increase for 2025-26.

With an understaffed and underfunded LAFD, and cuts being made to almost every other city department, how do we move forward?

A good place to start would be with the massive amount of money that is spent on the homeless crisis. Per a recent LAFD report dated March 27, 2025, the City of Los Angeles committed more total funding in each of the past four fiscal years (2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25) than was allocated to the LAFD. This same report stated that the LAFD responded to 76,449 total fires involving the homeless between 2018 and 2024, which amounts to an average of 35 homeless related fires every single day, 365 days a year, over six straight years.

In addition, from 2021 through 2024, the LAFD responded to a total of 252,952 emergencies involving at least one homeless person. That's an average of 173 calls per day for four straight years. LAFD Firefighters and Paramedics are on the frontlines of this crisis, responding to assaults, overdoses, medical emergencies, and fires that involve this population every single day – yet somehow the LAFD doesn't benefit from the incredible amount of funding that has been allocated to fight this problem.

Over the years, LA City voters have approved several homeless-related initiatives, but where is this money going, and what do we have to show for it? It's time to fundamentally change business as usual and better utilize the goodwill (and billions of dollars) that our collective constituents have granted city leaders. Our members are asking the City Council to help lead that effort because what we have been doing is simply not working.

We are, however, realistic and understand that asking for the type of fire department funding that is needed (and that cities like San Francisco and Seattle provide) is an exercise in futility for this budget cycle with such massive deficits. With that said, we implore the members of the City Council Budget Committee to at a minimum preserve the funding that has been proposed for the LAFD in Mayor Bass' 2025-26 Budget.

Our top budget request mirrors the number one priority expressed by Interim Fire Chief Villanueva in his budget letter dated April 22, 2025 regarding Payroll Integration Software and Staffing for a total of \$1,767,746.

LAFD Firefighters have experienced several problems with their paychecks since implementing the new payroll system. While these problems have gotten incrementally better through the support of additional payroll staffing resources and the efforts of our Mayor, Controller, and Personnel Committee Chair McOsker among others, it's our understanding that the only way to achieve a permanent solution is through the replacement of our legacy Network Staffing System (NSS) and the purchase of payroll integration software that works with the new system.

We are grateful for our elected leaders who have continued to highlight these payroll problems and push for solutions. Now we must provide funding for the software and the associated staff needed to fix our incorrect paychecks.

Regardless of the actions of the City Council with the final 2025-26 Budget, we will still have half the fire department that we need today in the City of Los Angeles. To be clear, these problems predate not only your time on the City Council but also the tenure of your colleagues and the Mayor herself. But the fact of the matter remains, we have a fundamentally understaffed and under-resourced fire department, which is incredibly dangerous when seconds can and do mean the difference between life and death. It's time to properly staff and fund the department moving forward.

Our firefighters stand ready to work with you and your colleagues in the months and years to come on both ongoing funding for the LAFD and a possible ballot measure to build the department that we need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Freddy Escobar', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Freddy Escobar
President
United Firefighters of Los Angeles City

CC: Budget, Finance & Innovation Committee Members
Honorable City Council Members
Mayor Karen Bass
CAO Matt Szabo
Interim Fire Chief Ronnie Villanueva
Board of Fire Commissioners