

Communication from Public

Name: Bet Tzedek Legal Services

Date Submitted: 01/13/2022 09:41 AM

Council File No: 21-4118-S16

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Councilmembers, We write from Bet Tzedek Legal Services. Our organization provides free legal services to housed and unhoused residents of Los Angeles County. We want to make clear our opposition to items 1 through 3 of the Committee's agenda and urge the Committee to support a temporary moratorium on enforcement of Los Angeles Municipal Code § 41.18. In light of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant, the City should not be placing at risk the lives of its most vulnerable residents by pushing them into congregate housing. On multiple occasions over the last week, Los Angeles County has shattered its record for daily COVID-19 cases.[1] On Sunday, the County recorded 45,584 new COVID-19 cases, marking the highest number of cases recorded in a single day since the pandemic began.[2] Unfortunately, our unhoused population has experienced the same surge: last week's total COVID-19 cases in people experiencing homelessness was the highest recorded weekly total since last winter's deadly wave.[3] Enforcing Section 41.18 and forcing unhoused Angelenos to relocate to congregate settings would only accelerate transmission among this already vulnerable population and escalate the recent surge in COVID-19 cases. Unvaccinated people face particularly high risks of severe illness and death related to the surge—recent data shows that unvaccinated individuals are 22 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than those who are vaccinated [4] —and only about 57% of unhoused individuals in the County are fully vaccinated.[5] Moreover, older adults, who remain particularly vulnerable to severe illness and death from COVID-19, comprise a significant portion of the unhoused population.[6] Sadly, pushing unhoused individuals into congregate living settings at such a dangerous moment in this pandemic could literally lead to their deaths. We urge the Committee to vote no on items 1 through 3 of the agenda and halt enforcement of Section 41.18 while we weather this latest surge. With case numbers spiking to new highs and Los Angeles County public health officials urging residents to postpone nonessential activities,[7] now is not the right moment from a public health perspective to force people into close contact with others. Recognizing that lives are literally at stake, we ask the Committee to support a temporary moratorium on enforcing Section 41.18 until the current spike in cases

subsidies. Sincerely, Preventing and Ending Homelessness Project
Bet Tzedek Legal Services Hana Kommel Cynthia Chagolla [1]
Press Release, LA County Reports Over 43,000 Cases Setting
New Daily Record, County of L.A. Dep't of Public Health (Jan. 7,
2022). [2] Id.; see also LA County Sets New Record With 45,584
Positive COVID-19 Cases, CBS Local (Jan. 9, 2022). [3]
Summary Report of COVID-19 in People Experiencing
Homelessness, 1/3/2022 to 1/9/2022, County of L.A. Dep't of
Public Health (Jan. 9, 2022). [4] Press Release, Latest Public
Health Data Shows Vaccines Are Still the Best Way to Protect
Against COVID-19, County of L.A. Dep't of Public Health (Jan.
7, 2022). [5] Editorial: With Omicron Surging, Now Is Not the
Time to Push Homeless People Into Group Shelters, L.A. Times
(Jan. 10, 2022). [6] 2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count,
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (June 22, 2020).
Adults 55 and older comprised 24% of the 2020 Greater Los
Angeles homeless count. The number of adults 62 and older
increased 20% from 2019 to 2020. [7] Luke Money, Rong-Gong
Lin II, Marvissa Evans, Emily Alpert Reyes, L.A. County Urges
Residents to Postpone Nonessential Gatherings, Activities as
Omicron Surges, L.A. Times (Jan. 11, 2022).



January 13, 2022

Homelessness and Poverty Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 North Spring Street, Room 1010
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: General Public Comment and Items 1, 2, and 3 of Agenda Regarding Enforcement of Los Angeles Municipal Code § 41.18

Dear Councilmembers,

We write from Bet Tzedek Legal Services. Our organization provides free legal services to housed and unhoused residents of Los Angeles County. We want to make clear our opposition to items 1 through 3 of the Committee's agenda and urge the Committee to support a temporary moratorium on enforcement of Los Angeles Municipal Code § 41.18. In light of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant, the City should not be placing at risk the lives of its most vulnerable residents by pushing them into congregate housing.

On multiple occasions over the last week, Los Angeles County has shattered its record for daily COVID-19 cases.¹ On Sunday, the County recorded 45,584 new COVID-19 cases, marking the highest number of cases recorded in a single day since the pandemic began.² Unfortunately, our unhoused population has experienced the same surge: last week's total COVID-19 cases in people experiencing homelessness was the highest recorded weekly total since last winter's deadly wave.³

Enforcing Section 41.18 and forcing unhoused Angelenos to relocate to congregate settings would only accelerate transmission among this already vulnerable population and escalate the recent surge in COVID-19 cases. Unvaccinated people face particularly high risks of severe illness and death related to the surge—recent data shows that unvaccinated individuals are 22 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than those who are vaccinated⁴—and only about 57% of

¹ Press Release, [LA County Reports Over 43,000 Cases Setting New Daily Record](#), County of L.A. Dep't of Public Health (Jan. 7, 2022).

² *Id.*; see also [LA County Sets New Record With 45,584 Positive COVID-19 Cases](#), CBS Local (Jan. 9, 2022).

³ [Summary Report of COVID-19 in People Experiencing Homelessness, 1/3/2022 to 1/9/2022](#), County of L.A. Dep't of Public Health (Jan. 9, 2022).

⁴ Press Release, [Latest Public Health Data Shows Vaccines Are Still the Best Way to Protect Against COVID-19](#), County of L.A. Dep't of Public Health (Jan. 7, 2022).

unhoused individuals in the County are fully vaccinated.⁵ Moreover, older adults, who remain particularly vulnerable to severe illness and death from COVID-19, comprise a significant portion of the unhoused population.⁶ Sadly, pushing unhoused individuals into congregate living settings at such a dangerous moment in this pandemic could literally lead to their deaths.

We urge the Committee to vote no on items 1 through 3 of the agenda and halt enforcement of Section 41.18 while we weather this latest surge. With case numbers spiking to new highs and Los Angeles County public health officials urging residents to postpone nonessential activities,⁷ now is not the right moment from a public health perspective to force people into close contact with others. Recognizing that lives are literally at stake, we ask the Committee to support a temporary moratorium on enforcing Section 41.18 until the current spike in cases subsides.

Sincerely,



Preventing and Ending
Homelessness Project
Bet Tzedek Legal Services
Hana Kommel
Cynthia Chagolla

⁵ [*Editorial: With Omicron Surging, Now Is Not the Time to Push Homeless People Into Group Shelters*](#), L.A. Times (Jan. 10, 2022).

⁶ [2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority](#) (June 22, 2020). Adults 55 and older comprised 24% of the 2020 Greater Los Angeles homeless count. The number of adults 62 and older increased 20% from 2019 to 2020.

⁷ Luke Money, Rong-Gong Lin II, Marvissa Evans, Emily Alpert Reyes, [L.A. County Urges Residents to Postpone Nonessential Gatherings, Activities as Omicron Surges](#), L.A. Times (Jan. 11, 2022).

Communication from Public

Name: Carla Truax

Date Submitted: 01/13/2022 12:26 PM

Council File No: 21-4118-S16

Comments for Public Posting: HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY COMMITTEE Thursday, January 13, 2022 Items 21-4118-S16, 21-4118-S18, 21-4118-S19
I strongly oppose Los Angeles Municipal Code 41.18 and designation of areas for displacement of people. I am a PhD student in urban planning at University of California, Irvine, I have a degree in public health, and I am a resident of Los Angeles County. I have read the research articles on this tactic, and sweeps have shown to be ineffective at keeping areas clean or at helping unhoused people. This strategy has been used since the 1950s, and is not a real solution. Pushing people from one place to another is part of the problem, and hinders the work of ongoing programs. The public areas potentially affected by this ordinance cover almost the entire city. We also cannot ignore the long history of racial housing discrimination and displacement in Los Angeles and sideline the reality that this ordinance targets the most marginalized. The myth that makes this type of treatment possible is that there is enough acceptable shelter for people, but we must look at what is actually happening on the ground. When we listen to unhoused people and organizations that help people and know the issues firsthand, they are telling us that there is not enough shelter. When you call around to the shelters on cold nights like this, they are full, and there are many requirements which are barriers to entry. Not to mention that the shelters are not equipped to be accommodating and safe. Everyone deserves respect, and we have to respect someone's valid reasons for not entering a shelter that is not accommodating or safe for that person for any reason. If we force people into a shelter, that is imprisonment. The real need is for permanent housing, and waiting lists for housing are at times years long. As long as we cannot offer actual housing to people, we cannot make their lives more difficult by criminalizing the human activities of sitting and lying down. When people are displaced, it makes it harder for them to get back in touch with workers who have housing referrals for them. The sweeps and theft of property is cruel; we cannot allow this to continue. This is peoples' survival at stake, which outweighs the concerns of other stakeholders. I know the political pressure from residents is high, but their distress at seeing unhoused people does not outweigh the rights and protection of vulnerable citizens. The principles of justice and a

duty to protect the most vulnerable say that we have to listen to the people who are affected by the policy. This is a bad call, programmatically and morally. I hope the committee and city council can change course and listen to people, service providers, and those who have studied this issue for decades. Thank you for your consideration. Carla Truax, MPH