

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: August 15, 2022

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso 
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No.: 22-0002-S105
Assignment No.: 22-07-0464

SUBJECT: Resolution (O'Farrell – Krekorian, Martinez, de León) to Support Legislative or Administrative Action Regarding St. Vincent's Hospital.

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached Resolution (O'Farrell – Krekorian, Martinez, de León) to include in the City's 2021-2022 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for legislative or administrative action to study and then fund State acquisition or lease, including necessary improvements, to make the former St. Vincent's Hospital in Los Angeles open and available in order to provide urgently needed care and beds to persons experiencing homelessness who require a higher level of care.

SUMMARY

Resolution (O'Farrell – Krekorian, Martinez, de León) was introduced on July 1, 2022 and states that California is in the midst of a homelessness crisis, especially in Los Angeles. The Resolution states that there are more than 29,000 unsheltered people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. The Resolution states that the California Policy Lab reports that approximately 17 percent of unsheltered homeless population have a service record that includes a diagnosis for a psychotic spectrum disorder.

The Resolution states that with the loss of board and care facilities, finding housing solutions with people experiencing homelessness with mental, physical, and substance use disorders is difficult. The Los Angeles County Substance Abuse Prevention and Control Department's Accidental Drug Overdose Deaths report identifies an alarming rise in preventable drug overdose deaths. The data collected by Los Angeles County show that there is a need for acute services and beds. The Resolution states that St. Vincent's Hospital site in Westlake is available to be used for housing to meet this need.

The Resolution recommends that the City support legislative or administrative action to study and then fund State acquisition or lease, including necessary improvements, to make use of the former St. Vincent's Hospital in Los Angeles for housing people experiencing homelessness with mental, physical, and substance use disorders.

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles Infirmary was established in 1856 by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, making it Los Angeles' first hospital. The name was changed to St. Vincent's Hospital in 1918. St. Vincent's Hospital grew to become a 366-bed facility, with over 1,300 staff and nearly 500 physicians and became a world renowned medical provider to the underserved and poor. In

2015, St. Vincent Medical Center became part of Verity Healthcare, a non-profit hospital operator. Various factors brought Verity Healthcare to bankruptcy in 2018. The hospital closed in 2020, though the State of California was using it temporarily as a treatment center for patients with COVID-19. In order to preserve the Daughters of Charity's core mission of providing care for vulnerable and underserved individuals, the buildings can be repurposed to address the homeless housing crisis and the lack of mental health services.

The City and County of Los Angeles have made multiple efforts to return the facility to use, but have not achieved any success so far. The building and its infrastructure can be useful in providing the necessary care for the many in need of housing and mental health services in Los Angeles. In order to achieve this goal, the State may have resources to study how it can operationalize the hospital once again. The State, which has financial resources related to health and mental health that are available to the cities can also take potential legislative or administrative action to identify such resources to actualize this goal.

The City should support State legislative or administrative action to study the necessary steps and funding needed to make the St. Vincent's Hospital in Los Angeles open and available because it would serve people in Los Angeles experiencing homelessness who require a higher level of care and provide the adequate care they require.



Pranita Amatya
Analyst

Attachment: 1. Resolution

RESOLUTION

RULES, ELECTIONS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must first have been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and,

WHEREAS, California is in the grips of a housing crisis that has significantly increased the rates of homelessness across the state and especially in the Los Angeles region, with more than 29,000 unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness in the City alone, and more than 45,000 in Los Angeles County; and,

WHEREAS, a recent study by the California Policy Lab reports that approximately 17 percent of the unsheltered population, or more than 7,600 people, have a service record that includes a diagnosis for a psychotic spectrum disorder; and,

WHEREAS, interim and permanent housing solutions for unsheltered persons with mental health, substance use disorder, and physical disability needs are challenging, particularly with the significant on-going loss of board and care facilities; and,

WHEREAS, the City has opened thousands of interim and permanent housing options over the last few years, including Tiny Villages, A Bridge Home sites, and permanent supportive housing, but more is needed, particularly to serve persons who require a higher level of care; and,

WHEREAS, as of the 2021 the LA County Substance Abuse Prevention and Control Department's Accidental Drug Overdose Deaths report quantified the alarming rise in preventable drug overdose deaths, especially during the pandemic, tied directly to the increased use of methamphetamine and fentanyl;

WHEREAS, the data collected by the County shows that now is the time to provide more acute services and beds, not less, St. Vincent's Hospital site in Westlake was closed in 2020 and the City and County have made multiple efforts to return the facility to use,

WHEREAS, every effort should be made to find the means to provide opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles who require a higher level of care to serve their mental health, substance use disorder, and physical disability needs, especially in the urban core and surrounding neighborhoods, St. Vincent's Hospital represents an amazing opportunity to meet that need; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2021-2022 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for legislation or administrative action to study and then fund State acquisition or lease, including necessary improvements, to make the former St. Vincent's Hospital in Los Angeles open and available in order to provide urgently needed care and beds to persons experiencing homelessness who require a higher level of care

PRESENTED BY:

Mitch O'Farrell
MITCH O'FARRELL
Councilmember, 13th District

SECONDED BY:

Paul Kubovic
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Janice

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