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July 27, 2016

Honorable Ricardo Lara
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Declaration of a State of Emergency to Combat Homelessness

Dear Honorable Ricardo Lara:

On behalf of the Downtown Long Beach Associates (DLBA), the 1,500 businesses and 4,000 commercial and residential property owners of the two Business Improvement District (BIDs) it represents, I am writing to respectfully request your consideration to support a resolution urging Governor Brown to declare a State of Emergency due to the increased numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness.

As representatives of the Downtown Long Beach community, the DLBA works tirelessly to make our community a desirable place to visit, work and live. We work collaboratively with service providers from the local Continuum of Care, the City of Long Beach, its Health Department, Long Beach Police Department's Quality of Life and Mental Evaluation Teams (MET), the Long Beach Multi-Service Center and Mental Health America (MHA) and the MHA Village, a nationally recognized facility that ensures proper resources and temporary housing are available to individuals in need.

While Long Beach has made great strides at decreasing the number of persons experiencing homelessness, there has been an increase among some of the most vulnerable populations, particularly unsheltered adult individuals experiencing a serious mental illness. Since 2013, this subpopulation has experienced a 16% increase. In addition and during that same timespan, Los Angeles County has seen the number of homeless women increase by 55%, and the number of homeless persons living in encampments, tents and vehicles increase by a staggering 123%. In total, Los Angeles County's homeless population has increased by 5.7% in the past year. Additionally, California's roughly 115,000 individuals experiencing homelessness accounts for 21% of the nation's homeless population, and California has the highest percentage of unsheltered homeless individuals.

As both the State of California and the County of Los Angeles are struggling to provide assistance to an unprecedented increase in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness, it is vital the Legislature take the actions necessary to allocate resources to address this public health and mental health crisis.

The DLBA respectfully requests the State Senate follow the lead from its counterparts in the Assembly and many other counties and cities, and pass a resolution urging Governor Brown to declare a State of Emergency and direct resources to support the efforts of major cities similar to Los Angeles and Long Beach, to address this growing problem.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you to address this public health and mental health emergency and to mobilize needed local and statewide resources to ensure that our 115,000 homeless persons receive vital housing and supportive services.

Sincerely,



Kraig Kojian
President & CEO