



News from: Office of the Mayor Libby Schaaf

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MAYOR LIBBY SCHAAF & CITY
COUNCILMEMBER ABEL
GUILLEN PROPOSE EMERGENCY
SHELTER LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS
HOUSING CRISIS

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OAKLAND, CA – Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf and City Councilmember Abel Guillen (District 2) introduced legislation to address the housing crisis in Oakland by calling on the City Council to declare a shelter crisis at its meeting tonight.

“Oakland has the second-fastest rising rents in the country,” said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. “As a result, we’re seeing more and more residents struggle with housing instability and homelessness. Declaring a shelter emergency immediately give us the tools to aid the most vulnerable, and the flexibility to come up with creative solutions to address the housing challenges of those in danger of being priced out of Oakland.”

The California Government Code sections 8698, 8698.1, and 8698.2 allow a governing body of a city to declare a shelter crisis when a significant number of persons are without the ability to obtain shelter, resulting in a threat to their health and safety. By declaring such a crisis, the City Council would authorize the suspension of certain rules and regulations concerning housing, health and safety, as applied to specific public facilities, to the extent that strict compliance would hinder the mitigation of the shelter crisis, thus enabling a more flexible set of building and land use requirements so a project could proceed in a more cost effective and expeditious manner.

“Oakland has an immediate need to quickly increase the number of shelter beds as the wet, cold winter weather is upon us,” said Oakland City Councilmember Abel Guillen.

“We're particularly concerned about creating shelter now for children and families. We must also implement longer-term strategies that address the near-homeless and integrate those efforts with the larger problem of affordable housing and displacement.”

The proposed ordinance before the Council also allows the City to establish alternative minimum health and safety standards to such public facilities during the duration of the crisis. The authority under this ordinance only affects additional public facilities open to the homeless and needed to mitigate the shelter crisis. The declaration would be in effect a minimum of one year.

Homelessness in Oakland and the Bay Area is a significant problem, and has been more apparent given the upward pressure on rents during the past two years. The number of homeless people in Oakland as of the most recent 2015 count is approximately 2190.

On any given night there are an estimated 1,384 people who are unsheltered. With approximately 350 shelter beds plus 60 beds during the winter months, a majority of homeless peoples are unable to find shelter.

The homelessness problem affects Oakland's population disproportionately: a majority of the homeless are African American and Latino. Often homelessness is accompanied by other challenges such as mental health difficulties, chronic physical illness, victims of domestic violence, and substance abuse.

An outgrowth of these limited shelter options is the growing number of unauthorized homelessness encampments throughout the city. These encampments present public health and safety threats to the people who live in them in multiple ways: crime, lack of sanitation and debris collection facilities, weather exposure, traffic hazards and other risks.

As a result of the market pressures and growing challenges of addressing the city's homeless population, over the past four months the City Administration has established an interdepartmental task force to examine other, more sustainable and effective approaches for housing the

homeless, including reallocation of the substantial annual City resources used for public safety, health, and clean up to house and assist the homeless in a different way.

This has been done in other cities which have established sanctioned shelters with more extensive support services and storage so that underlying problems can be addressed.

This City Administration's interdepartmental task force is working in concert with the Housing Cabinet Mayor Schaaf formed to address the impacts of the Bay Area's affordability crisis on Oakland to help preserve, build and protect housing for existing Oaklanders.

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