

County Board of Supervisors Testimony

05/19/2020

*Prepared Testimony regarding Expansion of the Hotel and Motel Voucher Program and Implementation of a Local Rent Subsidy Program*

Good Morning Board Chair Jacob and Supervisors Cox, Gaspar, Fletcher and Desmond.

My name is Savana Doudar. I am a policy associate for the ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties. The ACLU is a proud member of Invest in San Diego Families.

**I am here today to urge the Board of Supervisors to deepen the county's investments in non-congregate forms of shelter, such as the Hotel & Motel Voucher Program. San Diegans experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness deserve expansive protections and resources.**

Folks who are experiencing homelessness are at a great risk of contracting COVID-19. Homeless shelters are congregate living facilities that cannot realistically abide by CDC social distancing and cleanliness guidelines. We must transition our region's homeless community from emergency shelters into non-congregate forms of shelter.

In their 2020 [Point-in-Time Count](#), the Regional Task Force on Homelessness identified 7,619 individuals experiencing homelessness in San Diego County. More than half of this population is facing unsheltered homelessness. We are glad the county government is providing access to hotel and motel rooms for people experiencing homelessness and proactively looking into programs that assist individuals transitioning from temporary living situations to more stable forms of housing such as the Rent Subsidy Program. However, the Point-in-Time count underscores the need for more vouchers and greater resources to assist folks transitioning out of emergency shelters. To accurately serve the needs of this vulnerable community, we must increase our investments in the Hotel & Motel Voucher and Rent Subsidy programs.

Moving forward, the county must continue to be proactive. We call on you to support the ISDF recommendations, including creating a Tenant and Homeowner COVID-19 Relief Fund to assist middle to low-income people, regardless of their immigration status, as well as implementing rent control.

**In the wake of COVID-19, the Board must act quickly to expand protections, resources and re-entry methods for San Diegans experiencing homelessness.**

Thank you for your time and leadership during this unprecedented public health crisis.