



May 5, 2021

Public Comment Re: Measure H Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Dear Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office:

Care First South Pasadena is a community coalition that is reimagining public safety in our community by realigning dollars toward human services rather than policing.

We do not agree with the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget's allocation of \$1.791 million of Measure H funding to the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department and local police departments through the Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) program.

Funneling Measure H funds to law enforcement for outreach to unhoused people in the community is the wrong approach. The purpose of outreach is to develop trust, a connection to community, and hopefully in time, a bridge to appropriate services. The purpose of policing—enforcement of laws—is at odds with those goals.

In South Pasadena, officers are tasked with addressing both neighbors' complaints about people who are unhoused and the humanitarian needs of the unhoused. South Pasadena's homeless plan says that 20% of the calls to dispatch are regarding unhoused individuals—a staggering percentage given that the 2020 LAHSA point-in-time survey identified only 15 unhoused individuals in our city. Officers notify unhoused individuals that they need to take down camps and remove personal items from public spaces. They request installation of dividers on bus benches to prevent unhoused individuals from sleeping there when housed neighbors complain. Officers are also tasked with connecting unhoused people to resources. They distribute blankets and masks.

Unsheltered people are far likelier to be cited and arrested for a range of reasons, not least of which are laws that criminalize homelessness. *See, e.g.*, South Pasadena Municipal Code §§ 24.02(c)(26) & (27). Many unhoused people have had traumatic experiences with law enforcement. Some unhoused people report discomfort speaking to law enforcement because other unhoused people suspect they are reporting illegal activity, sowing distrust among the local unhoused community.

The South Pasadena Police Department receives substantial funding for HOST engagements.¹ According to Care First's preliminary review of public records, the County reimbursed South Pasadena **\$5,350 per month**, on average, for its officers' overtime hours doing HOST outreach

¹ The Measure H grant does not allocate funding specifically for SPPD but does assign SPPD the role of overseeing and implementing the grant for South Pasadena. As part of the city's Measure H grant, South Pasadena committed \$25,000 in matching funds for SPPD in the role as Homeless Coordinator. SPPD is entitled to reimbursement from the County for overtime hours worked by officers during HOST engagements. County of Los Angeles, Chief Executive Office, Expansion of Sheriff's Homeless Services Outreach Teams, June 29, 2020, <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/146384.pdf>. The SGVCOG grant allocates \$20,000 to "non-law enforcement outreach" and an additional \$20,000 to public outreach programming by SPPD over the course of about 18 months.

over eight months in 2019 and 2020. SPPD officers worked **77 hours** of overtime per month, on average, doing HOST engagements during the same eight months.

The opportunity cost of spending \$5,350 per month in South Pasadena to pay police officers to perform non-enforcement outreach cannot be overstated.

- That money could pay for at least one full-time professional outreach worker in South Pasadena.
- The funding could subsidize three to five rental units in South Pasadena, where the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment is currently \$1,850.

Law enforcement agencies engaged in “non-enforcement outreach” have been given an impossible task. Law enforcement officers do not have access to the Coordinated Entry System, which would allow them to enter unhoused individuals into the system, locate an individual’s caseworker, and identify available services and housing. As shared in the Measure H reports, “a real challenge in getting new program enrollees [is] to accept shelter and services.” This process “requires building a relationship and trust.” Even with the best intentions, police departments’ effectiveness is limited.

South Pasadena argues it lacks infrastructure to recruit and hire non-law enforcement personnel, like licensed clinical social workers and housing navigators, to conduct outreach and connect unhoused people with services. Yet if more resources are directed to law enforcement, it will make it that much harder to fund and recruit appropriate non-law enforcement professionals to address homelessness.

Policing people experiencing homelessness, under the guise of outreach, is now publicly recognized as a cruel and outdated practice designed to exclude specific populations of people from the city. In the past, South Pasadena was a sundown town. It used the same methods of policing to remove non-whites from the city after dark and exclude non-whites from the community. Policing the unhoused is an extension of that antiquated form of policing. According to San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, 75% of people experiencing homelessness in our region are people of color. Deputizing law enforcement to address unhoused people living in our community is out of sync with the community’s goal of being inclusive and anti-racist.

Spending \$1.791 million throughout the County on police officers and sheriff deputies to perform outreach—when communities everywhere are calling to reinvest in community services and programs and end the era of mission sprawl by law enforcement agencies—is unacceptable. Thank you for considering our comment.

Signed,

