



August 22, 2019

William Scott
Chief of Police
1245 3rd Street, 6th floor
San Francisco, Ca 94158

Dear Chief Scott,

Thank you for your active listening to our presentation, and public comment on Wednesday, August 7, 2019 regarding the Healthy Streets Operation Center. Furthermore, thank you for your commitment to bringing the various front facing city departments on the homeless issues together for better coordination. We appreciated learning of some recent changes to the operations, but have pending concerns with the effectiveness of the approach.

To recap our concerns:

- 1) **SFPD remains the primary response to homelessness.** We shared alternative models, such as Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets or "CAHOOTS," a mobile crisis intervention response and support team located in Eugene, Oregon, where health workers, instead of police, act as first responders. While this would take time to develop, we believe this effective, innovative approach should be the focus of new policy initiatives.
- 2) **Existing data does not demonstrate positive outcomes in terms of reducing homelessness and moving people out of homelessness.** For example, none of the data presented shows what happens once an encampment is removed. Data including the breakdown of citations was not available upon request recently, and data presented at the commission appeared to be partial, and therefore did not demonstrate a decrease in citations. There is no data which records when confiscated personal property is disposed of, nor is there data tracking when individuals seeking their property are turned away by city workers.
- 3) **The focus on the removal of tents, when no appropriate alternative exists and when the sidewalk is not obstructed, is inhumane.** It was reported by Deputy Chief Lazaar that they confiscate tents after an offer of shelter is rebuffed. We have

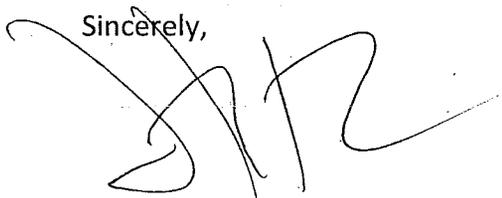
heard reports of confiscated tents without an offer of shelter. Regardless, federal guidelines suggest that an offer of shelter must lead to housing, and that is the case for only a small portion of those entering shelters and navigation centers. In addition, the recent ruling in Santa Rosa suggests that appropriate shelter offers are those lasting more than 30 days and takes into consideration individuals' disabilities. Oftentimes, as was pointed out in the hearing, disabilities make shelter inappropriate for the client. It is also inappropriate for police officers to assess disabilities, pointing again to the need for a health response.

- 4) **We continue to oppose the threatening of homeless people with arrest for being homeless, particularly when no viable alternative exists, and the issuing of misdemeanor charges for lodging.** These actions both increase the criminalization of homeless people and destabilize them, pointing to extrajudicial punishment as homeless people lose their belongings are forced to vacate premises when they have nowhere to go, and are brought into 850 Bryant.

At the end of the hearing, Commissioners indicated a desire for a stakeholders' working group on these issues with Commissioner participation. We are deeply committed to working on the aforementioned issues with the goal of both reducing homelessness and responses to homelessness by the SFPD. We firmly agree with the Budget and Legislative Analyst Office, whose 2015 report found that \$20.7 million was spent annually on the criminalization of homeless people without any positive outcomes. This money could be used instead for exits out of homelessness; for example, it would sufficiently cover the cost of 1,300 housing subsidies, about one third of our unsheltered homeless population. Additionally, that expense has increased significantly as the number of officers addressing homelessness has more than tripled since the release of the report (21 in 2015 compared to 75 today).

Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Friedenbach
Executive Director

c.c.

President Robert Hirsch
Commissioner Petra de Jesus
Commissioner John Hamasaki
Commissioner DionJay Brookter

Vice President Damali Taylor
Commissioner Thomas Mazzucco
Commissioner Cindy Elias