



MEMORANDUM

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To: Robin Stieler, Clerk of the Board

From: Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, Second District

Vicente Sarmiento

Date: Friday, December 22nd, 2023

RE: Agenda Item for January 9th, 2024, Board of Supervisors Meeting

Please add the following item to the January 9th, 2024 Board of Supervisors agenda Discussion Calendar: "Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program".

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CLERK OF THE BOARD
COUNTY OF ORANGE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Recommended Actions:

1. Approve the use of \$1,500,000 from the Second District's discretionary ARPA funding and \$1,500,000 from the General Fund allocation to create and support a Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program.
2. Find under Government Code section 26227 that the expenditure of funds for the Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program will serve a public purpose and is necessary to meet the social needs of County residents.
3. Authorize and direct the County Executive Officer, or designee, to negotiate and enter into an agreement as necessary with a provider to effectuate the purpose of the Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program.

Background:

The Homeless Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program (Program) aligns with the County's overarching commitment to the Homeless Service System Pillars, comprised of four pillars including Prevention, Outreach & Supportive Services, Shelter, and Housing. This Program is intended to support the Prevention Pillar by keeping individuals and families housed, avoiding eviction through short-term interventions to stabilize housing, and ultimately reducing the overall number of people experiencing homelessness in a cost-effective manner.

In June 2023, the *California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness* report was issued and reported that more than 171,000 people in California experience homelessness daily. In order to make meaningful progress in addressing homelessness, a concerted and comprehensive effort needs to be made to prevent additional households from falling into homelessness.

In 2017, Orange County United Way released the report, *Homelessness in Orange County: The Cost to our Community*. The report was co-authored with the University of California, Irvine and Jamboree Housing and found that, “approximately \$299 million was spent to address homelessness in Orange County by governmental and non-governmental entities in a 12-month period encompassing 2014/2015.” At that time, it was estimated that the service cost to help a person who is experiencing chronic homelessness is about \$100,000 annually, which is equivalent to about \$130,000 in today’s dollars.

The County of Orange (County) has been tracking and reporting¹ on its own homelessness expenditures since 2017. Since Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-2018 to FY 2022-2023², the County spent a total \$723.24 million in funding allocated specifically for homelessness programming. In FY 2023-24, the County is budgeted to spend \$241,964,093 to continue addressing homelessness through services that include housing, health care services, mainstream and supportive services programs, shelter operations, and street outreach programs. The majority of the County’s prevention efforts for individuals and families at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness have been in the areas of treatment and services for *mental and physical health*. This Program will be the County’s *first program to address the prevention of homelessness through an economic solution*.

The Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program’s goal is to promote stability in the lives of people facing imminent loss of housing and assist them through direct payments, wrap around services, and case management to keep them housed with less than one-tenth of the cost.

On December 13, 2023, this proposal was presented at the Commission to End Homelessness meeting. The presentation led to a positive discussion along with constructive implementation suggestions which will be incorporated into the program. The item was well received, and unanimously supported.

I. Program Description

The Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program combines homelessness prevention and robust case management aimed at promoting housing stability. Homelessness Prevention is a short-term (no longer than 12-months) financial intervention provided to individuals and families at risk of homelessness or experiencing a housing crisis to achieve housing stability to cure rental arrears, past due utility bills (electricity, gas, water, and trash), vehicle repairs and insurance payments, and forward rent and/or utility bills based on financial need. The robust case management focuses on developing a financial stability plan, and supportive services plan to identify community-based programs and resources that support the household in achieving housing stability. The goal of the Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program is to keep individuals and families in their homes, avoid displacement, and identify supportive services to promote long-term housing stability. The expected program enrollment for households will be twelve-months, based upon need and evaluated on a quarterly basis.

¹ Detailed Table of Resources for the County of Orange’s System of Care Funding - <https://ceo.ocgov.com/sites/ceo/files/2023-08/FY%202023-24%20Listing%20by%20Homeless%20Resources.pdf>

² Summary Table of the County of Orange’s System of Care Funding - <https://ceo.ocgov.com/sites/ceo/files/2023-08/FY%202023-24%20Summary%20of%20Homeless%20Resources.pdf>

Eligibility Criteria:

The **eligible population** for the Homelessness Prevention and Stabilization Pilot Program requires applicants to be an Orange County resident at risk of homelessness, with the minimum age of 18, Medi-Cal eligible and have an Area Median Income (AMI) of 30 percent or below.

- Be at risk of homelessness as defined by:
 - An individual or family who does not have sufficient resources, immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place not meant for human habitation; and
 - Meets one of the following conditions:
 - Currently in formal eviction proceedings; or
 - Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance.

Priority Population:

Within those who are at risk of homelessness, there is a **priority population** which includes seniors 60+ and single parent households.

Program Evaluation:

Program evaluation is a critical component of the Program and will be conducted by a local academic institution to study the problem statement, the affected population, and provide findings regarding the impacts this Program had on the participants' ability to avoid homelessness. This may include:

- Housing stability – how many months participant was able to stay in home without triggering eviction process?
- Improved food security – how much of the allocation was spent on food and where food was acquired (i.e., number of times food was purchased at grocery store vs. fast food)?
- Ability to acquire other “Basic Needs” – measure the frequency of uninterrupted transportation to and from school, work, doctor’s appointments, etc.

The County will also have internal operational performance metrics for the Provider administering the Program such as length of time from inception of application to first disbursement of funds, number of participants completing workshops/classes, etc. Program updates will also be provided on a quarterly basis to the Commission to End Homelessness in order to ensure accountability.

Program Partners:

- County of Orange/Supervisor Sarmiento’s Office
- CalOptima Health
- Commission to End Homelessness
- Research university

Additional Services:

- Workforce development
- Financial Literacy Support
- CalAIm (subject to eligibility)
 - Enhanced Care Management
 - Housing Tenancy and Sustaining Services

- Housing Transition Navigation Services
- Housing Deposits
- “Whatever it Takes” Program