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California's Big 11 mayors back legislation for \$1.5 billion to address homeless crisis

Sacramento, Calif. – Mayors from California's 11 largest cities will lobby at the state Capitol on Wednesday, April 11 for AB 3171, which would allocate \$1.5 billion from the state budget to cities addressing the growing homelessness crisis in California.

"Tens of thousands of people are living on the streets in California cities, creating a humanitarian and public safety crisis that shocks the conscience and diminishes cities' economic vitality," said Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg, chairman of the Big 11 group. "While the state has taken some steps to help, cities still lack the resources to make a demonstrable difference."

California's homeless population now stands at 134,278, according to 2017 statewide counts – an increase of 16% from 2015. Cities across the state are struggling to provide shelter and services with money from their own general funds and voter-approved ballot measures, but those aren't enough.

AB 3171 would support long-term solutions to homelessness, such as permanent housing and rental assistance. It would also immediately provide for emergency measures, including triage shelters and navigation centers with wrap-around services. By leveraging local matching funds, the legislation would result in \$3 billion in funding statewide.

AB 3171 is scheduled for its first legislative hearing before the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee on April 25. The bill is authored by Assemblyman Phil Ting (D-San Francisco) and State Sen. Ricardo Lara (D-Bell Gardens) is principal co-author.

"Homelessness in California has reached crisis levels," said Ting. "A partnership with cities is critical if we are going to get people into supportive and transitional housing as quickly as possible."

Below, California mayors speak about the impact of homelessness on their communities, and the need for this legislation:

"Cities are on the front lines in the fight against homelessness, and Los Angeles is already investing billions of dollars to get people off the streets," said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. "But we can't do it alone — AB3171 would give us the state funding we need to get all of our unsheltered into homes as soon as possible."

"Homelessness has reached crisis levels across California so it only makes sense for the Capitol to team up with cities to fix it," San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer said. "This bill will help cities that are investing in effective homeless solutions that get people back on their feet and increase access to housing. Solving this problem means we have to do things differently, so I'm proud to join this bipartisan coalition to call for change."

"Our growing homelessness crisis has exacted an enormous human, economic and social toll on communities across the state," said San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo. "This bill will allow San Jose to accelerate the construction of more affordable housing and implement new approaches to house our homeless neighbors more quickly, and more effectively. It's time we come together to fix this crisis."

"Homelessness, poverty and addiction are issues that do not stop at city limits or town boundaries," said San Francisco Mayor Mark Farrell. "These are difficulties facing municipalities across California—we need funding from the state to help complement the initiatives we are leading at the local level. Homelessness is the great challenge of our time, but by working together, we can make real, lasting change for Californians everywhere."

"I am glad to join with my fellow mayors in a bipartisan effort to address this crisis," said Fresno Mayor Lee Brand. "The issue of chronic homelessness and problems it causes for virtually every community in California is a growing concern, and this proposal will help give our cities the resources they need to develop comprehensive, compassionate solutions."

"Homelessness is a moral issue that our generation must address," said Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia. "In Long Beach, I am proud our City has helped 935 individuals and families achieve permanent housing over the last couple years and I'm particularly proud of the work we've done to help veterans who are homeless find housing. But that is not enough. We must do more for the nearly 700 people who we know are currently experiencing chronic homelessness in our city. Cities are at the front lines of this crisis and funding must be made available to support homeless services programs."

"As the rate of homelessness balloons across the state, Oakland stands united with California's largest cities to call upon the Legislature and Governor to address the crisis right now," said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. "Even as mayors are investing in innovative strategies, cities cannot sufficiently contend with the rapid increase in people living on our streets who simply cannot afford to pay skyrocketing rents. California cities need flexible spending to be used for rapid rehousing programs, emergency rental assistance, and other local programs we can implement right away. As one of the wealthiest and most innovative places in the world, California can and must do better."

"Combating homelessness in our society is a paramount issue, which requires bold action," said Bakersfield Mayor Karen Goh. "I am honored to stand with my colleagues from California's largest cities to advocate for state funding to assist all communities dealing with this growing challenge."

“Cities are where California’s homeless crisis is playing out and where it will be solved,” Anaheim Mayor Tom Tait said. “In Anaheim, outreach, partnership and a pathway to stable housing have helped us transition nearly 1,000 people from homelessness. But there is more to be done and more we can do. For California, investing in cities is one of the most direct, impactful ways to change homelessness in our state.”

“AB 3171 is the catalyst that cities across California need to leverage a considerable amount of funds to address the critical issue of homelessness,” said Santa Ana Mayor Miguel Pulido. “This bill has the ability to provide long-term impacts that will be transformative for our communities.”

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