



July 26, 2016

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Governor  
State of California  
California State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

REQUEST FOR GUBERNATORIAL DECLARATION OF STATEWIDE STATE OF HOMELESS EMERGENCY

Dear Governor Brown:

On July 26, 2016, the Santa Rosa City Council unanimously passed a motion urging the State of California to declare a state of homeless emergency given the immediate crisis in our community and throughout the State. On the same night, Santa Rosa declared both a shelter crisis and a local homeless state of emergency. Addressing homelessness is a top priority for the City of Santa Rosa and for many communities across California. It is time for the State to recognize that this crisis has risen to the level of an emergency.

California has the nation's largest homeless population (22%) and the highest rate of unsheltered homeless (64%) while at the same time ranking as the seventh largest economy of the world. Rising rents, a shortage of affordable housing, and slow wage growth have all contributed to homelessness. Communities across the state are facing a pervasive and deepening homeless crisis that imminently endangers the health and safety of tens of thousands of residents, including veterans, women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, and seniors. Locally, Sonoma County's 2016 point-in-time count identified 2,906 homeless persons on a given night, 1,906 (66%) of whom were unsheltered.

While Santa Rosa has more than doubled its funding for homeless services programs, supporting a range of evidenced-based solutions such as increasing shelter bed capacity and sponsoring a street outreach program with dedicated rapid-rehousing resources, improvements to the local homeless services system alone cannot overcome the crisis. Research shows that the cost of doing nothing to address homelessness is far greater than the preventative cost of providing housing and coordinated services. Funding levels at the local, state, and federal level are allowing us to move forward but are well short of putting the money on the table that we and other communities need to end homelessness, let alone address the state's continuing affordable housing crisis.

Homelessness has risen to historic levels across the state. Now is the time for state action. On behalf of the City of Santa Rosa, and our surrounding community, I am writing to urge you to declare a statewide state of homeless emergency to address this growing humanitarian crisis throughout California.

Sincerely,

JOHN SAWYER  
Mayor, City of Santa Rosa