May 18, 2023

Mayor Gloria and San Diego City Council Members:

As researchers who live and work in the San Diego region, we are committed to harnessing knowledge toward the betterment of society. We write to express our strongest opposition to the proposed expansion of the encampment ban ordinance. If enacted, this ordinance is likely to be ineffective, harmful to public health and the natural environment, and expensive to enact and enforce. This letter is signed by 162 scholars and educators from across our region's major colleges and universities.

The proposed ordinance will not solve homelessness. We implore you to rescind the proposed ordinance and instead explore evidence-driven alternatives. This ordinance will not end, solve, or address homelessness in San Diego. Instead, it will push homeless San Diegans further away from outreach and services,[1,2] and widen existing health and social disparities between those with stable housing and those without.[3]

The timing of this ordinance is particularly bad: housing costs are high, vacancy rates are low, and capacity in transitional housing, shelters, and permanent supportive housing is insufficient.[4,5] Data suggest our region is nowhere near having sufficient temporary or permanent housing options to meet demand— one recent estimate shows that nearly two-thirds of referrals to shelters are not fulfilled in a typical week in the City of San Diego.[6]

One justification provided for the proposed ordinance is that people are simply unwilling to go into shelters.[7] However, research suggests the majority of people experiencing homelessness are ready and willing to accept shelter or housing that addresses their basic needs.[8,9] Emergency shelter options are severely limited in San Diego, people avoid shelters for valid reasons such as violence and unsanitary conditions, and existing shelter options often do not match people's needs.[9,10] People may decline shelter because they don't want to be separated from their partner, pet, or loved ones; people have experienced theft and/or interpersonal violence from residents and/or staff in shelters; people trying to stay sober and people struggling with substance abuse issues have different shelter needs; and older people and people with disabilities need accommodations that work for them. At other times, people seeking shelter are not deemed eligible. UCSD researchers have recently found that some seniors living in tents or in their vehicles have been refused limited services because they are not considered vulnerable enough to be prioritized for rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing.[11]

Addressing homelessness through criminalization and policing does not reduce the numbers of people living unsheltered.[2] Last month, SDSU researchers presented research findings to the full City Council that document the negative consequences of the use of police to enforce anti-homelessness laws—including racial bias in how these laws are enforced—and offered a comprehensive set of alternative approaches that the City should explore.[12] This ordinance would increase unhoused people's exposure to police at a time when police in San Diego are

not equipped to address homelessness. The work of getting people connected with services and housing is best done by trained, non-police professionals. SDSU researchers show that unhoused San Diegans report experiencing a frequent lack of respect during encounters with officers of the San Diego Police Department, including overt racism, sexism, and homophobia, as well as a failure to offer basic services during encounters – in direct violation of the City's own "progressive enforcement" model. Relying on police to enforce this measure is unlikely to achieve the goal of getting people quickly and safely off the streets and into housing, due to mistrust of uniformed officers.

The proposed ordinance would harm public health and the natural environment. San Diego, like many cities, is confronting a fentanyl epidemic with especially devastating impacts on unhoused people.[13] The proposed ordinance would make an already dire situation worse by displacing people from social and resource networks that keep them alive. Enforcement of this ordinance would result in the mass displacement of people staying near service providers, particularly in the East Village neighborhood of downtown San Diego, with no planning for the public health and social-cultural consequences of disrupting communities of people who are trying to survive daily on our streets. Some of these individuals are living with substance abuse issues developed as a coping strategy in response to homelessness. Some people want to get treatment but cannot access it due to stigma or insufficient treatment options.[14,15] In their current residential patterns complete with established social networks, people know where to safely obtain Narcan when needed. A 23-city study published last month in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* explored the long-term health effects of involuntary displacement of people experiencing homelessness who inject drugs in US cities. The study finds:

> *involuntary displacement of people experiencing homelessness may yield substantial increases in morbidity and mortality over a 10-year period. Involuntary displacement is estimated to worsen overdose and hospitalizations, decrease initiations of medications for opioid use disorder, and contribute to deaths among people experiencing homelessness who inject drugs.*[16]

It is not an overstatement, then, to say that people will die unnecessarily if this ordinance is enacted.

Moving people away from social and resource networks will increase the risk of infectious disease transmission due to even more restricted access to public restrooms, resulting in a repeat of outbreaks such as hepatitis A and shigellosis that San Diegans have experienced before.[17] Based on research from SDSU's Project for Sanitation Justice,[18] there are approximately 354 public restrooms in the City of San Diego. The proposed ordinance would make it illegal for people to stay near an estimated 331 of these restrooms. We already lack enough access to restrooms in high population areas like downtown San Diego, especially overnight.[19] Unhoused San Diegans are forced to practice open defecation when restrooms are unavailable. Some people actively avoid police—whom they view as perpetrators of harm[20]— and will stay in more remote areas such as riverbeds and canyons where resources are harder to access. Although people experiencing homelessness in the San Diego River riverbed take

great care to practice healthy defecation habits,[21] a lack of access to basic hygiene and being forced into unpopulated areas that are hard for service workers to access is unsafe, undignified, and unhealthy. The proposed ordinance would increase the very behaviors we should prevent to protect human life and ecologically sensitive areas.

The proposed ordinance would be expensive to enforce and would deepen poverty for those experiencing homelessness. In addition to unnecessary loss of human life, the costs associated with this ordinance will be substantial. Above, we just reviewed empirical evidence regarding the increased hospitalizations we can expect to see if this ordinance is enacted. Litigation is also likely: this ordinance is legally questionable, it will be challenged in court, and it will be expensive to defend—with taxpayers footing the bill.[22]

Councilmember Whitburn and Mayor Gloria have referenced plans for sanctioned camping sites as a way to allay concerns that people staying on our streets will not have places to go, but these plans are not part of proposed ordinance modifications[23] and are unlikely to move forward in the near term, or at all, given public opposition.[24,25] With essentially every public and private space off-limits for sleeping, but insufficient camping, shelter, and housing placement options, people without access to personal vehicles may have no means to comply with the ordinance. For some, this means more tickets they cannot pay and more arrests that result in loss of personal property and disconnection from social networks.[26] For those forced to comply, departure from City boundaries may mean spillover into neighboring cities or unincorporated areas that may be even less equipped to offer services.

Explore creative alternatives instead of doubling down on criminalization, which we know does not work. We as local researchers and educators stand ready to help explore evidence-driven solutions to the crises unfolding daily on our city's streets. The first task must be to focus our limited resources on diversifying and increasing housing options instead of criminalization. Homelessness is a housing problem.

Signed,

Megan Welsh Carroll, PhD, MSW
Associate Professor, San Diego State University

Jennifer Nations, PhD
Managing Director, Homelessness Hub at UC San Diego

Mike Williams, JD, PhD
Professor of Political Science and International Relations and Director of Changemaker Hub, USD

Madison Swayne, PhD in Urban Planning & Development
Assistant Professor, San Diego State University

Jennifer Felner, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor, School of Public Health, San Diego State University

Stacey Livingstone, M.A.
PhD Candidate, UCSD

Jessica Barlow, PhD
Professor of Sustainability, San Diego State University

Lilly Irani
Associate Professor of Communication & Urban Studies and Planning, UC San Diego

Jerel Calzo, PhD, MPH
Associate Professor, School of Public Health, San Diego State University

Leslie R. Lewis, PhD, MPH
Continuing Lecturer, Urban Studies and Planning Department, UC San Diego, Director of Education and Community Engagement, Homelessness Hub @UC San Diego

Kerry Keith
Ph.D. Candidate, UC San Diego

Allison Gable
Urban Studies and Planning Student at UC San Diego

Brian Adams, PhD
Professor, San Diego State University

Emmet Norris
PhD Student, Scripps Institute of Oceanography

Vanesa Ribas, PhD
Associate Professor of Sociology, UCSD

Chad "CJ" Justin Valasek, PhD
Postdoctoral Researcher, School of Medicine, UC San Diego

Danielle Dean
Associate Professor, Visual Art Department, UC San Diego

Elana Zilberg, PhD
Associate Professor of Communication, UC San Diego

Steffanie Strathdee, PhD
Harold Simon Distinguished Professor of Medicine, UC San Diego

Laramie R. Smith, PhD
Associate Professor of Medicine, UC San Diego School of Medicine

Rebecca Fielding-Miller, PhD, MSPH
Assistant Professor and Director of Global Health Justice and Equity research group, UCSD
Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health

Kristen Hill Maher, PhD
Professor of Political Science, San Diego State University

Vinton Omaleki, MPH
Public Health Researcher

Kristine Ngo, Mental Health Clinic Supervisor
UCSD Alumni

Angelina Lopez
Green Infrastructure Research Associate, UC San Diego Bioregional Center

Erin Hill, PhD
Assistant Professor - Communication - UCSD

Samantha Streuli, PhD
Postdoctoral Researcher, Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health, UC San Diego

Juli Beth Hinds, AICP, MCRP
Instructor and Staff Research Associate, Urban Studies and Planning, UC San Diego

Sam Gaffney
PhD Candidate, Department of Communication, UC San Diego

Nicolas Gutierrez III
Master's Candidate, School of Public Affairs, San Diego State University

Richard Garfein, PhD, MPH
Professor, Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health, UC San Diego

Julia Miller Cantzler, J.D., PhD
Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology; Chair, Department of Anthropology, University of San Diego

Carina Rodrigues, MS
Alumna & Research Assistant, School of Public Affairs, San Diego State University

Annick Borquez, PhD
Assistant Professor at UCSD

Shira Goldenberg, PhD
Assistant Professor, School of Public Health, San Diego State University

Anh Vo, MSPH
Qualitative Researcher

Linda Hill, MD, MPH
Assistant Dean, Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health, UC San Diego

Marianne McKennett, MD
Clinical Professor UCSD Department of Family Medicine

Natasha Martin, DPhil
Professor, Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health, UC San Diego

Emily Schmeid, PhD
Assistant Professor, School of Public Health, SDSU

Abigail Andrews, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, UCSD

Jacob Carson, MPH
PHD Student, San Diego State School of Public Health

Marlene Flores, MA
Public Health Researcher

Tina Le, MPH
Public Health Researcher

William Griswold, PhD
Professor, Computer Science & Engineering, UC San Diego

Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell, PhD
Associate Teaching Professor, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, UC San Diego and
Faculty Director of the Homelessness Hub

Daniel Kellogg, MPH
Epidemiologist, San Diego State University Research Foundation

Isaac Martin, PhD
Professor, Urban Studies and Planning, UC San Diego

Elizabeth Eikey, PhD
Assistant Professor, UC San Diego

Greg Prieto, PhD
Associate Professor of Sociology, USD

Angela Bazzi, PhD, MPH
Associate Professor of Public Health, UC San Diego

Tiffany A. Dykstra-DeVette, PhD & Director of the Institute for Dialogue and Social Justice
Associate Professor, School of Communication, San Diego State University

Shelby Huffaker, MPH
Public Health Researcher, UC San Diego

Jamila K. Stockman, PhD, MPH
Professor, Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health, Department of Medicine, UC San Diego

Jim Miller, PhD
Professor, San Diego City College/VP AFT 1931

Matthew Savage, PhD and Director, SDSU Office of Academic Community Engagement
Professor, School of Communication, San Diego State University

Jillian Tullis, PhD
Associate Professor of Communication, University of San Diego

Thomas Patterson, PhD
Professor, Department of Psychiatry

Lisa Cartwright, PhD
Professor, UCSD

Angela Nurse, PhD
Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of San Diego

Sandra Sgotuas-Emch, PhD
Professor of Psychological Sciences, Affiliated faculty in Women and Gender Studies and Ethnic Studies, USD

Martin Repinecz, PhD
Associate Professor and Director of Spanish, University of San Diego

Gail Perez
Faculty in Ethnic Studies, Professor Emerita, University of San Diego

Peter Davidson, PhD
Associate Professor

Tereza Trejbalová, PhD in Criminology and Criminal Justice
Assistant Professor, San Diego State Universit

Lindsey Lupo, PhD
Professor of Political Science, Point Loma Nazarene University

Halina Duraj, PhD
Associate Professor, English, University of San Diego

Casey Roulette, PhD
Associate Professor of Anthropology, San Diego State University

Antonieta Mercado,
Associate Professor in Communication and Director of Program in Latin American Studies, USD

Lauren Brown, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor

T.J. Tallie, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of History; Chair, Africana Studies Program, University of San Diego

Joseph Gibbons, PhD
Associate Professor of Sociology

Laura Bamford, MD, MSCE
Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health, UC San Diego

Diana A. Chen, PhD
Associate Professor in Integrated Engineering, University of San Diego

Nydia C. Sánchez, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Leadership Studies, University of San Diego

Susannah Stern, PhD
Professor of Communication and Honors Program Director, University of San Diego

Jennifer Tillman, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow, University of San Diego

Jess Whatcott, PhD
Assistant Professor of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies, San Diego State University

Matilde Cordoba, PhD
Associate Professor, Communication, UC San Diego

Valerie Stahl, PhD
Assistant Professor of City Planning, San Diego State University

Veronica Uribe A., MA
Phd Candidate, University of California San Diego

Brian Goldfarb, PhD
Chair and Associate Professor, UCSD Communication Department

Cathy Gere, PhD
Professor, History of Science, UCSD

Carl Luna, PhD
Visiting Professor of Political Science & Director of the Institute for Civil Civic Engagement

Adina Batnitzky, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of San Diego

Matthew Vitz, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of History, UC-San Diego

Timothy Wyman McCarty, PhD
Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, University of San Diego

Joseph Stramondo, PhD
Associate Professor and Director, Institute for Ethics and Public Affairs, SDSU

Alana Lopez, MPH
PhD student, SDSU/UCSD

Nithyanand Rao, PhD Student
UC San Diego

Fernando Domínguez Rubio, PhD
Associate Professor, Communication. UC San Diego

Jimiliz Valiente-Neighbours, PhD
Associate Professor of Sociology, Point Loma Nazarene University

Esther Choi, PhD
Ethnic Studies, UCSD

Jennifer Thunstrom, MA, C.Phil
Lecturer, School of Public Health, San Diego State University

Odilka Santiago, PhD
Assistant Professor, University of San Diego

Matthew Verbyla, PhD Environmental Engineering
Assistant Professor of Environmental Engineering, San Diego State University

Shawn Flanigan, PhD
Professor, School of Public Affairs, San Diego State University

Jamie Gates, MDiv, PhD
Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Restorative Justice, Point Loma Nazarene University

Steven Berkley, PhD
Assistant Professor, University of San Diego

Amanda C. McClain, PhD, MS
Assistant Professor, College of Health and Human Services, San Diego State University

Katrina Pariera, PhD
Associate Professor of Communication, San Diego State University

Paul Alexander
Professor, San Diego City College

Mary Anne Smart, MS
PhD Candidate, UC San Diego

Tarik Benmarhnia, PhD
Associate Professor, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UCSD

Peggy Peattie, PhD
Adjunct Professor of Journalism and Media Studies, San Diego State University

Taylor Brough, MA
PhD Student, Communication. UC San Diego

Moon Pankam, MS
PhD Student, UC San Diego

Christine Hunefeldt
Professor of History, University of California San Diego

Christo Sims, PhD
Associate Professor of Communication, UC San Diego

Jesse Mills, PhD
Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies, UC San Diego

Ebony Tyree
Professor, San Diego City College

Tresa LeClerc, MA, PhD
Lecturer, UCSD

Ash Cornejo
PhD student, Teaching Assistant, UC San Diego

Diane Keeling, PhD
Associate Professor of Communication, University of San Diego

Luke Stroth, MA
PhD Candidate, UCSD

René Molenkamp, PhD, MDiv, LPC
Professor of Practice, Department of Leadership Studies, USD

Ruth Wallen
Lecturer, Visual Arts, UCSD

Benjamin Han, MD
Associate Professor of Medicine, UC San Diego

Jordan Griffin
PhD Student, UC San Diego

Marie Draz, PhD
Associate Professor, San Diego State University

Autumn Hudock, MA
PhD Student, UC San Diego

Kelly Mayhew, PhD
Professor, San Diego City College

Neil Gong, PhD
Assistant Professor of Sociology, UCSD

Brittnie Bloom, PhD
Lecturer, San Diego State University

Natalie Mladenov, PhD
Professor, San Diego State University

Marina Katague, MPH
PhD Student, SDSU/UC San Diego

Kimberly Kras, PhD
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, San Diego State University

Erica Redner-Vera, PhD
Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, San Diego State University

Amy Nantkes, PhD
Faculty, Political Science, Point Loma Nazarene University

Audrey Beck, PhD
Associate Professor of Sociology, SDSU

Joshua Chanin, JD, PhD
Associate Professor, San Diego State University

Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió, PhD
Assistant Professor, Urban Studies and Planning, UCSD

Jill Esbenshade, PhD
Professor of Sociology, San Diego State University

Eric Hekler, PhD
Professor and Associate Dean, Community Partnerships, Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Sciences, UC San Diego

Emilie Amrein, DMA
Associate Professor and Chair of Music, University of San Diego

Kate S. Boersma, PhD
Associate Professor, University of San Diego

David Kamper, PhD
Chair & Professor, American Indian Studies, San Diego State University

Erika Robb Larkins, PhD
Professor of Anthropology, San Diego State University

Rebecca Lewison, PhD
Professor of Biology, San Diego State University

Amanda Lanthorne, MA, MLIS
Associate Librarian, San Diego State University

Maureen Dotson
Administrative Analyst, San Diego State University

Melisa Farnsworth
Project Facilities Specialist, San Diego State University Library

Sarah Conner, MA
Library Services Specialist

Matt Fowler, MFA
Lecturer, American Indian Studies, SDSU

Savanna Schuermann, MA
Senior Lecturer, Anthropology and Sustainability

Todd Palmer
Marine Debris Researcher, SDSU

Hassan Davani, PhD
Assistant Professor, SDSU

Katherine Holvoet, MLIS
Associate Librarian

Evelyn Kirkley, PhD
Associate Professor, University of San Diego

Jess Ponting, PhD
Associate Professor, San Diego State University

Kurt Hanselman, MLIS
Sr. Assistant Librarian, San Diego State University

Bruce Appleyard, PhD
Professor of City Planning and Urban Design at SDSU

Kristofer Patron-Soberano, Masters Degree in Environmental Management
Programs Manager for the Center for Regional Sustainability, SDSU

Olivia Chilcote, PhD
Assistant Professor of American Indian Studies, San Diego State University

Iana Castro, PhD
Professor, San Diego State University

Amanda Ruiz, PhD
Associate Professor of Mathematics, University of San Diego

Mounah Abdel-Samad, PhD
Associate Professor of Public Administration,School of Public Affairs, San Diego State University

Adisa A. Alkebulan, Ph.D.
Chair & Associate Professor, Africana Studies, San Diego State University

Jenny Wong-Welch, MSLIS
Associate Librarian, San Diego State University

Kevin Modesto, Ph.D., MSW
Co-Chair, Sociology, Social Work and Family Sciences, Point Loma Nazarene University

Nico Calavita, Doctorate in Urban Planning
Professor Emeritus, Graduate Program in City Planning SDSU

Carrie Nacht, MPH
PhD Student

[1] Flanigan, S. & Welsh, M. (2021). Unmet needs of individuals experiencing homelessness near San Diego waterways: The roles of displacement and overburdened service systems. *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration, 43*(2), 105-130.

[2] Herring, C. (2019). Complaint-Oriented Policing: Regulating Homelessness in Public Space. *American Sociological Review, 84*(5), 769-800.

[3] Westbrook, M. & Robinson, T. (2020). Unhealthy by design: Health and safety consequences of the criminalization of homelessness. *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness, 30*(2), 107-115.

[4] Greenberg, J. & Thomas, T. (2023, March 30). *San Diego Anti-Displacement Study Existing Conditions Report.* Urban Displacement Project. https://urban-displacement.github.io/edr-sandag/

[5] San Diego Housing Commission (2021, September). Residential Vacancies in the City of San Diego

[6] Halverstadt, L. (2022, October 14). Homeless Residents Often Can't Get the Shelter They Seek. *Voice of San Diego.*

[7] Gloria, Todd. 2023, April 21. Email from Office of Mayor Todd Gloria to constituents.

[8] Wusinich, C., Bond, L., Nathanson, A., Padgett, D. (2019). "If you're gonna help me, help me": Barriers to housing among unsheltered homeless adults. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 76*(101673).

[9] Donley, A.M. & Wright, J.D. (2012). Safer Outside: A Qualitative Exploration of Homeless People's Resistance to Homeless Shelters. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice, 12*(4), 288-306.

[10] Serving Seniors. (2021). Senior Homelessness: A Needs Assessment.

[11] Livingstone, S. (in progress). *Forced to Linger: The Consequences of Coordinated Entry Systems.*

[12] Welsh Carroll, M., Flanigan, S., & Gutierrez III, N. (2022). Black lives experiencing homelessness matter: A critical conceptual framework for understanding how policing drives system avoidance among vulnerable populations. *Public Integrity.*

[13] Halverstadt, L. (2022, November 21). Fentanyl Plagues San Diego's Homeless Population. *Voice of San Diego.* https://voiceofsandiego.org/2022/11/21/fentanyl-plagues-san-diegos-homeless-population/

[14] Tsai, A., Kiang, M., Barnett, M., Beletsky, L., Keyes, K., McGinty, E., Smith, L. Strathdee, S., Wakeman, S., Venkataramani, A. (2019). Stigma as a fundamental hindrance to the United States opioid overdose crisis response. *PLOS Medicine.*

[15] Halverstadt, L. (2023, March 2). Amid an Overdose Crisis, Many San Diegans Struggle to Access Detox. *Voice of San Diego.*

[16] Barocas, J.A., et al. (2023). Population-Level Health Effects of Involuntary Displacement of People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness Who Inject Drugs in US Cities. *Journal of the American Medical Association.*

[17] San Diego County Grand Jury (2018, May 17). THE SAN DIEGO HEPATITIS A EPIDEMIC: (MIS)HANDLING A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS. https://www.cgja.org/sites/default/files/sd_-_hepatitis_a_epidemic.pdf

[18] The Project for Sanitation Justice at San Diego State University.

[19] Welsh Carroll, M., O'Donnell, R., Rios, A., Swayne, M., Felner, J., & Calzo, J. (2022,

December). Public restroom access in Downtown San Diego. San Diego State University: The Project for Sanitation Justice.

[20] Flanigan, S. & Welsh, M. (2021). Unmet needs of individuals experiencing homelessness near San Diego waterways: The roles of displacement and overburdened service systems. *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration, 43*(2), 105-130.

[21] Hinds, J.B.; Garg, Teevrat; Hutmacher, Sarah; Nguyen, Andrew, Zheng, Zhongqi, Kenneth Schiff. (under review) Assessing the Defecation Practices of Unsheltered Individuals and Their Contributions to Water Quality in an Arid, Urban Watershed.

[22] Letter to members of the Land Use Committee, City Council of the City of San Diego.

[23] Lewis, S. (2023, April 25.) Todd Gloria Wants You to Know He Has Had It. *Voice of San Diego*.

[24] Halverstadt, L. (2023, March 21.) Balboa Park Groups Opposing Potential Safe Campground. *Voice of San Diego*.

[25] Dulaney, Cody. 2023, March 31. Studies Show Policing Doesn't End Homelessness. San Diego Officials Double Down Anyway. *iNewsSource*.

[26] Kate DeConinck, Mike Williams, Merlynn Watanabe, Luis Chavez Rodriguez, Morgan Kern and Shaylyn Becton. (2021). Experiences with Law Enforcement and Citations Among San Diego's Homeless Population. University of San Diego: Urgent Challenges Collective.