

From the desk of Joe Gardner

February 17, 2019

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
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Governor Newsom,

As you spoke about in your inauguration speech, California is facing a crisis of homelessness, with tens of thousands of our citizens languishing on our streets. It is clear many suffer from addictions to drugs and alcohol. Many more, with severe mental illness are neglected and fend for themselves at the risk of recurring victimization and disease. Our communities have felt the impact by the loss of safety and blight. I am driven, as you stated, by a moral imperative to act and seek your consideration and action.

Being on the forefront of dealing with the issues of homelessness throughout my law enforcement career and what I do today in the way of street ministry to those in need, I feel it is beyond time to help our homeless citizens. We face the return of communicable diseases like typhus. There are also predications of outbreaks of bubonic plague. The sad reality is our legislators, through the initiative process took away the tools and opportunities for mandatory rehabilitation and medical treatment from the criminal justice system and law enforcement with the implementation of AB 109, Propositions 47 and 57. We now neglect those most in need because many never make it to court. To use your own words: "The suffering must stop."

You also said in your speech "we will be bold." I am asking you to be true to your word to "lift up against homelessness." It will mean we must provide opportunities once again to move the addicted and mentally ill into forced treatment through the courts as we did effectively decades ago. We recognized addicts and the mentally ill won't or can't do it on their own. Judges did the humane gesture of mandating treatment. I have seen the faces of those who have reached sobriety. They have told me how they got to that lucid moment and were able to change their lives for the better by sticking with rehab. I have seen those treated for mental illness become functional and able to sustain themselves and live in safety of shelter and care. I have been thanked by some of them for helping them get there.

Let us indeed "go far together." Keep your door open to all and anyone willing to address the issues of homelessness from the local officials, legislators, the courts and law enforcement. Let's truly be compassionate and challenge them to act to rescue all those suffering on the streets once and for all.

Sincerely,



cc: Assemblywoman Blanca Rubio, Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Supervisor Hilda Solis

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