



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STATE, COUNTY, CITY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS ISSUE CALL TO ACTION  
on Homelessness at 28th Annual Empowerment Congress Summit**

On a weekend dedicated to the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a group of state, county, city and community leaders together issued a call to action on homelessness at the 28th Annual Empowerment Congress Summit.

“We must resolve, in our hearts and minds, that it is our duty to improve lives beyond our own,” Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, founder of the Empowerment Congress, told about 800 people gathered for the summit’s plenary session at Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science (CDU) in Willowbrook. “By taking action, we have a chance to live out our professed values and bring them in line with our most sacred right: dignity for all.”

Los Angeles City Council President Nury Martinez, along with State Assemblymembers Mike Gipson, Autumn Burke, and Miguel Santiago, and California State Association of Counties (CSAC) President Lisa Bartlett also urged everyone to do their part to address what the Supervisor called the “moral and civic crisis of our time.”

“As I begin my Council Presidency, we will focus more on homeless prevention and service, particularly for vulnerable communities such as women, families, the working poor, and foster youth transitioning into adulthood,” City Council President Martinez said. “As elected officials, we also need to lead with courage and urgency to ensure that every

district and every neighborhood throughout LA City and County are sharing in the responsibility to address this crisis. We must do more to lift up people experiencing homelessness and turn their despair into hope, their dreams into reality.”

“California’s homelessness issue has gotten terrifyingly out of control,” Assemblymember Santiago said. “We have a real obligation to get homeless families and individuals into safe housing and provide them with services to help get them back on their feet. To do that, we need bold, creative solutions now.”

“We are facing a humanitarian crisis; all children and families deserve a home,” Assemblywoman Burke added.

CSAC President and Orange County Supervisor Bartlett said, “The Empowerment Congress Summit is a great example of how elected officials, community leaders, and stakeholders from across the state can come together to share innovative ideas and work together to solve the most challenging issues of our communities in peril.”

The call to action comes in the wake of Governor Gavin Newsom issuing an Executive Order and proposing an unprecedented investment of \$1.4 billion in the state budget to address homelessness. Elements of the Governor’s spending plan had been inspired by programs in Los Angeles County.

The call to action also follows the Governor’s Council of Regional Advisors, co-chaired by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas and Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg, issuing a 40-point Comprehensive Crisis Response Strategy.

On Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors will vote on a motion by Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Janice Hahn that seeks to develop a framework for multiple Los Angeles County departments to start implementing priority elements of that Comprehensive Crisis Response Strategy, particularly for those people currently living on the streets who are ready to come indoors.

The goal is to determine how those priority elements can be operationalized in Los Angeles County in the short term, but with targets and timelines to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness. The County CEO’s Homeless Initiative and Office of Emergency Management would be tasked to lead this effort, in partnership with other departments that touch homelessness.

Addressing the Empowerment Congress Summit, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said, “I pledge to urge my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors to make ending homelessness an obligation and a responsibility -- not just a goal to aspire to. This requires a real emergency response, with more resources, more ingenuity, and more intentionality and speed.”

He told the crowd, “Today, I call on each and every one of you to answer the call to action -- to do more, to dig deeper, to help bring everyone in. This could mean finding out which nonprofit is helping the homeless in your neighborhood and offering support. It could mean donating your time to serve a meal or mentor someone.”

Dr. David M. Carlisle, President and CEO of CDU, said the campus was honored to host the summit for the second consecutive year. “We have deep roots in the South Los Angeles communities that are the focus of this event,” he said. “Over five decades ago, this institution was founded to address health disparities in under-resourced areas such as South Los Angeles. Our vision is similar to that of this conference, as we seek to ‘educate, engage, and empower’ individuals in our communities.”

The Empowerment Congress is a national model for civic engagement and a precursor to neighborhood councils. Founded by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas in the wake of the 1992 civil unrest in Watts, it is a dynamic partnership among residents, neighborhood groups, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and religious institutions within the diverse communities of Los Angeles County’s Second Supervisorial District. Working to educate, engage and empower individuals and communities to take control of their futures, it has several committees that meet throughout the year to discuss various issues, and an annual summit with a plenary session and workshops.

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