

September 9, 2015

Los Angeles City Council
Homelessness and Poverty Committee
200 North Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Impact of Homelessness on Families Residing in Downtown Los Angeles

Dear Councilmembers,

As families who are raising our children in downtown Los Angeles, we write to you out of grave concern for our children's safety. The number of homeless individuals in our community has exploded over the past year and we have seen a dramatic increase in crime rates—with a direct and detrimental impact on the health and well-being of children and families downtown.

Whether walking our children to school, sitting with our children in a park or attempting to take advantage of local cultural institutions, we daily encounter individuals who are high or drunk and behaving in alarming and threatening ways. For example, a man exposed himself to a mother and two children playing at Spring Street Park's playground. On another occasion, a woman who appeared to be intoxicated accidentally struck an 8-year-old boy on Spring Street between 5th and 6th streets, then followed the boy and his mother and screamed at them as they attempted to walk away from her. Another parent has been forced to take a circuitous walking route from Little Tokyo to the Historic Core as she is worried she will encounter threatening individuals along the way.

With the opening of Pershing Square Playground, these issues have taken on even more urgency. While the park's guards are doing their best to keep homeless individuals out of the playground areas, the playgrounds are still surrounded by severely mentally ill and intoxicated individuals, some of whom have cursed and threatened the guards who are attempting to keep our children safe.

The hard truth is that as street-level conditions deteriorate, many parents are choosing to leave downtown and raise their children elsewhere. While we love the downtown community and its diversity and culture, we are also obligated to keep our children safe. As things currently stand, it is difficult for us to stay downtown where our children will witness so much mental illness, addiction, violence and despair.

This issue doesn't just threaten children's safety, but also downtown LA's economic vitality. Without families, downtown LA will never truly become a sustainable community. The continuous loss of families is detrimental to downtown's growth and long-term success.

We are asking you to take immediate action to keep families in downtown Los Angeles by helping homeless individuals to find housing and treatment and improving conditions on our streets. Without a strong commitment to building supportive housing and addressing issues of mental illness and addiction, downtown will continue to lose children and families—and our community will be impoverished as a result.

Regards,

The Families of Downtown Los Angeles

cc: Councilmember Jose Huizar, Co-chair
Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Co-chair
Councilmember Mike Bonin
Councilmember Gilbert Cedillo
Councilmember Curren D. Price Jr.