



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 28, 2021

The Honorable Deanne Criswell  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Criswell:

On behalf of the State of California, our counties and our cities, we thank you for FEMA's steadfast support of Project Roomkey, our non-congregate sheltering program to protect people experiencing homelessness from COVID-19.

FEMA's partnership under President Biden has led to the safe sheltering of over 42,000 of California's most vulnerable residents and has demonstrably prevented much more catastrophic outcomes among our unsheltered residents. We appreciate the Biden Administration's commitment to fund this program through September of this year.

In light of continuing joint, state-local government efforts to protect people experiencing homelessness from COVID-19, **we respectfully request a continuation of FEMA's 100 percent cost share reimbursement for Project Roomkey, through at least June 30, 2022.**

A recent study of the efficacy of the Project Roomkey program concluded that there was an 81 percent success rate in the isolation/quarantine course, and only 4 percent of those transferred from the county hospital required readmission for COVID-19 progression. This study, in addition to numerous anecdotal sources from programs throughout our state, have showed that a hotel-based strategy has been a critical component of stopping the spread of the disease and ensuring that at-risk people experiencing homelessness are able to recover safely outside of a hospital setting.

The evidence supporting the health benefits of Project Roomkey is clear – and so are the conclusions about the incredible benefits to the people receiving these services,

such as access to mental and physical health care, increased feelings of stability and wellbeing, and higher exits to permanent housing, with greater engagement with homeless housing services after exiting. It is this evidence that motivates us to continue this shelter model until we are able to exit these individuals to the safety and dignity of permanent housing. Reducing homelessness across the country will also serve as a protective factor against future disasters and pandemics.

The state and our local partners are collectively doing our part – providing guidance, funding, and technical assistance to communities with their ongoing operations and rehousing efforts. In the coming fiscal year, my Administration has proposed an additional \$150 million to Project Roomkey to support rehousing efforts and to ensure we are able to continue to provide this life-saving service to those in need while programs work to secure housing placements and wraparound supports. Other notable state investments this coming year include \$7 billion in state investment into the Homekey program – funding for local governments to acquire and rehabilitate housing and clinical placements for people experiencing homelessness, all potential exits for clients currently residing in Project Roomkey hotels.

It is with the knowledge of the benefits of Project Roomkey and our high hopes for rehousing as many current participants as possible that we request that FEMA continue to provide reimbursement for non-congregate shelter while we work to ensure that each resident has a connection with a permanent housing option before the program ends. Ongoing FEMA reimbursement through at least June 30, 2022 would allow our communities to continue operations as they work to rehouse participants to ensure as many successful, healthy exits from the program as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California



Mayor Sam Liccardo, San Jose  
Chair, California Big City Mayors



Supervisor James Gore, Sonoma  
President, California State  
Association of Counties



Mayor Cheryl Viegas-Walker, El Centro  
President, California League of Cities