

Draft Letter to CM Bonin

DATE: February 4, 2020

TO: Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti, City Council of Los Angeles and Councilman Bonin

RE: Homeless Encampment Cleanup

On or about April 23, 2020 Los Angeles City Council Motion 20-0147 suspended homeless encampment cleaning. Among the premises advanced for the suspension are: resumption of cleaning is too disruptive and might interfere with access to services. The media and concerned citizens have since reported rodent infestations, the buildup of trash and human defecation.

The CDC lists a number of diseases directly transmittable through rodents, particularly their feces, including respiratory diseases, meningitis and salmonella to mention a few. The CDC further identifies human feces as a source of dysentery, typhus, cholera and hepatitis A&E amongst others. As the rains approach it is distinctly possible that many of the unhoused will be subject to liquefied waste.

To the objection that cleaning is a tremendous disruption: We acknowledge the disruption, but posit that the health implications far outweigh the disruption. Further, there is no immediately available evidence from the CDC, or others, that Safer at Home protocols are as efficacious for the unhoused as for the housed. Further we suggest if handled properly with sufficient security, testing, sanitary facilities and onsite services the cleanings can be executed without dislocating the encampments.

We are empathetic to those suffering homelessness and are anxious for solutions that do more than disrupt people in need of various care options and services. A pandemic is not the time to reduce health standards as it allows for the possible resurfacing of diseases we think to be controlled or extinct. This is a public health issue that affects every member of our community.

To the detractors of cleanup we remind you of an old truth: "It's possible to love people to death".

Sincerely, Paula Gerez, President, Neighborhood Council of Westchester / Playa

CC: Mayor Garcetti, Hannah Levien (title), Departments: TBD

CC: Council Motion 20-0147