

JULY 3, 2024

COMMUNITY AUDIT OF THE MAYOR'S

INSIDE SAFE PROGRAM



AETNA ST
SOLIDARITY

LA
STREET CARE
& Mutual Aid

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BACKGROUND

WHAT IS INSIDE SAFE?

When Mayor Karen Bass took office in December 2022, she declared a state of emergency on homelessness in the City of Los Angeles. The following week, Bass launched her Inside Safe program, promising it would move people from encampments into motels and provide services before permanently housing them.



Karen Bass describing her strategy for developing Inside Safe one year after the program’s launch.¹

The Mayor’s signature program was quickly plagued with scandal. Inside Safe shuffled many participants around multiple locations across the City, far from their neighborhoods of origin.² Reports of the program’s inhumane conditions emerged,³ including accounts of people starving at Inside Safe motels.⁴

Mayor Bass has repeatedly refused accountability, failing to release transparency reports on the program’s spending and efficacy.⁵

When a federal judge ordered an audit of Inside Safe, Bass attempted to block an audit from L.A. Controller Kenneth Mejia, wasting public funds on a private audit.⁶ The Mayor’s continued pattern of deflection demands community action and accountability.

18 months

since Inside Safe launched

\$341M

program budget as of May 31, 2024⁷

539

people currently housed⁷

1,265

currently sheltered in motels⁷

842

“exited” the program⁷

44

died in Inside Safe⁷

45,252

City of L.A.’s estimated unhoused population as of Jan 2024⁸

¹ “Mayor Karen Bass reflects on 1st year in office,” KTLA Dec 14, 2023

² “Who’s Steering the Ship for ‘Inside Safe’?” Knock LA Mar 16, 2023

³ “Bass’s signature homelessness program faces big growing pains,” KCRW Mar 13, 2023

⁴ “Mayor’s ‘Inside Safe’ Program To Ease Homelessness Spawns An Advocacy Coalition: ‘Inside Starving.’” LAist May 8, 2023

⁵ “Missing Inside Safe Transparency Reports Raise Accountability Questions As Mayor Bass Makes Homelessness LA’s Top Priority,” LAist Apr 28, 2023

⁶ “Inside Safe Audit,” LAist Mar 8, 2024

⁷ “Inside Safe Overview,” Controller’s City of LA Homelessness Dashboard / “Inside Safe Report,” L.A. Homeless Services Authority Jun 10, 2024

⁸ “2024 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count,” L.A. Homeless Services Authority Jun 27, 2024

COMMUNITY SURVEY

WHY CREATE A SURVEY?

Countless Inside Safe participants have shared their experiences in the program with news outlets, on social media, at press conferences, and in open letters. Their testimony has been powerful, but Mayor Bass has refused to respond to their pleas for help and demands for improvements. Numbers have the potential to convey a powerful story, too. This report presents quantifiable evidence that debunks the Mayor and her allies' claims about Inside Safe.

WHY THESE QUESTIONS?

We asked people living in Inside Safe motels which questions they wanted the survey to include. It's that simple. **Imagine what Inside Safe could accomplish with \$341 million if they took this approach, listened, and addressed the needs of impacted communities.**



WHO DID YOU SURVEY?

We surveyed 56 people from six L.A. City Council Districts at nine Inside Safe motels. Respondents represent 4.3% of the 1,313 people sheltered in Inside Safe motels at the time the survey was administered.¹ The survey opened April 7, 2024 and closed May 13, 2024.

The median move-in date of survey respondents was October 2023. More than 34% entered Inside Safe more than a year ago.

56

survey respondents

4.3%

of people sheltered in Inside Safe motels who participated in the survey

9

Inside Safe motels where this survey was administered

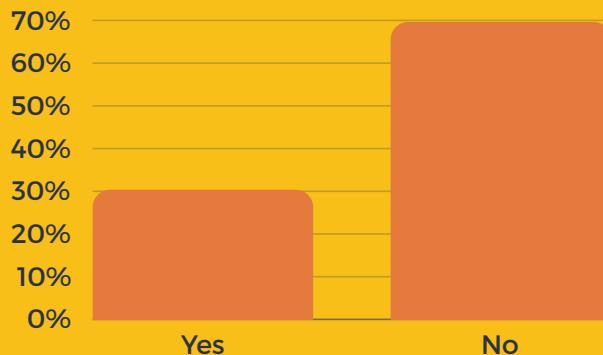
6

L.A. City Council Districts that respondents originated from

¹ “Inside Safe Report,” L.A. Homeless Services Authority May 17, 2024

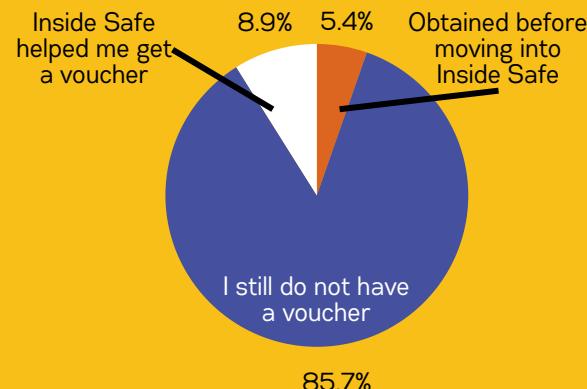
HOUSING

WE ASKED: HAS ANYONE WORKED WITH YOU TO FIND PERMANENT HOUSING?



More than **two thirds** of respondents said **no one from Inside Safe has worked with them to find permanent housing in any capacity**. Securing permanent housing is the stated goal of Inside Safe.

WE ASKED: DID INSIDE SAFE HELP YOU OBTAIN A HOUSING VOUCHER?



Inside Safe helped just 9% of respondents obtain housing vouchers. One told us, “Inside Safe didn’t help with [my] housing voucher, another org did.”

539

people currently housed by Inside Safe¹

236

people who were housed by Inside Safe but have since lost housing¹

57%

of those currently housed have time-limited subsidies and are likely to lose housing when subsidy expires¹

NOT-SO PERMANENT HOUSING

After **18 months** and **\$341 million**, Inside Safe currently houses just **539 people**.¹ The program previously housed an additional **236 people**, who have since lost housing. That’s because the majority of Inside Safe’s “permanent” housing placements are time-limited subsidies.

One participant shared that Inside Safe offered a 50% rental subsidy that would expire after a year. This means **most people placed in “permanent housing” will have to pay at least market rate (in this case \$2,200/month) or face eviction**.

The average studio apartment in L.A. currently rents for **\$1,664**.² Minimum wage in

L.A. is **\$17.28** as of July 1, 2024.³ Inside Safe is setting people up for failure.

Permanent supportive housing combines housing assistance with voluntary support services to address needs as people are re-housed. These services are designed to enable independent living while connecting people with community-based health care, employment services, and improve their quality of life. Permanent supportive housing is proven to be the most successful method for long-term housing stability.⁴

Inside Safe has only placed 2.5% of participants in permanent supportive housing.¹

¹ “Inside Safe Overview,” Controller’s City of L.A. Homelessness Dashboard / “Inside Safe Report,” L.A. Homeless Services Authority June 10, 2024

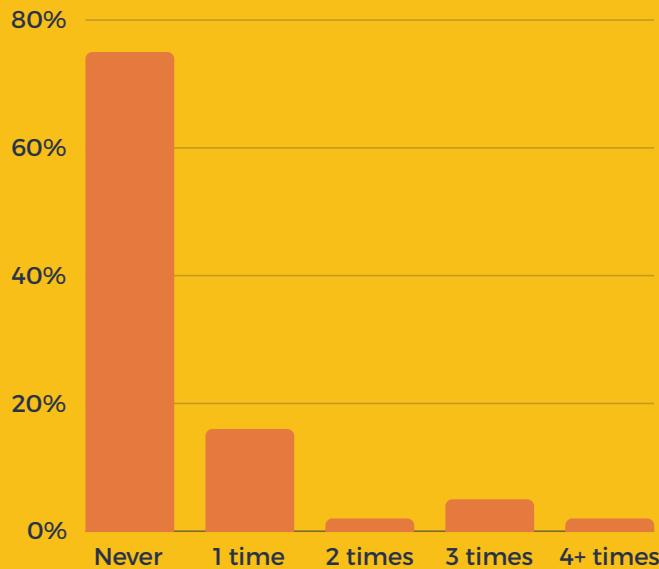
² “Rental Market Trends in Los Angeles,” Apartments.com Jul 2, 2024

³ “Raise the Wage L.A.,” City of L.A. Office of Wage Standards Jul 1, 2024

⁴ “Study Finds Permanent Supportive Housing is Effective for Highest Risk Chronically Homeless People,” University of California San Francisco Sep 17, 2020

MENTAL HEALTH

WE ASKED: HAS INSIDE SAFE PROVIDED YOU WITH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES?



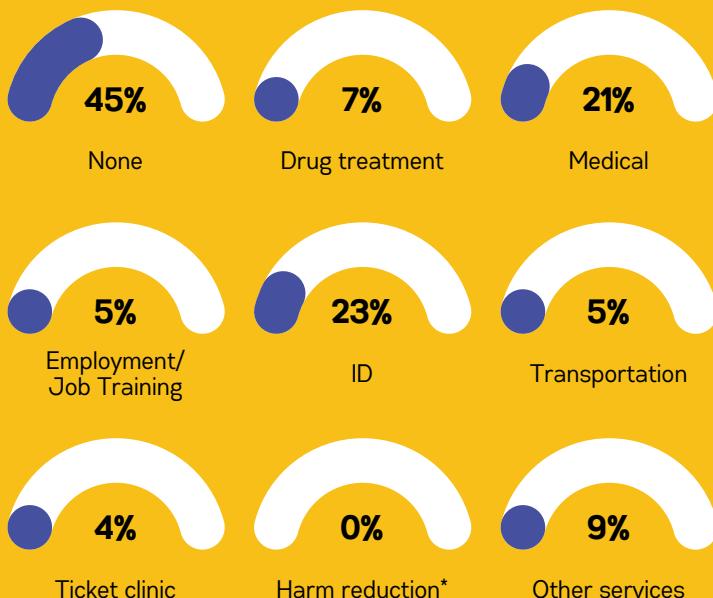
Mayor Bass and her allies claim Inside Safe provides mental health services, but **75% of respondents said the program has never provided mental health services**. Only five reported meeting with a mental health provider more than one time.

Many participants reported experiencing **anxiety, depression, and poor mental health**. “I’m struggling with depression and we can’t visit other rooms [in the motel],” one shared. “That makes it really difficult.”

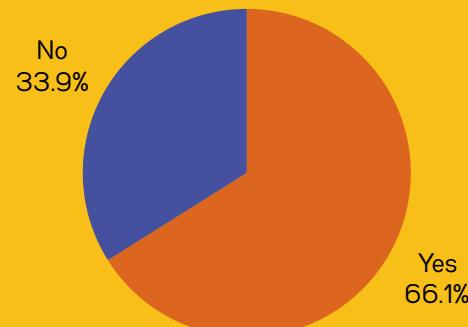
Another described their experience in Inside Safe as “**too isolating**” because they’re “not allowed to have anyone around, just us in a room by ourselves. We were given a different impression of what this program would be like when we moved here.”

SOCIAL SERVICES

WE ASKED: HAS INSIDE SAFE PROVIDED YOU WITH OTHER TYPES OF SERVICES?



WE ASKED: DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR CASE MANAGER IS?



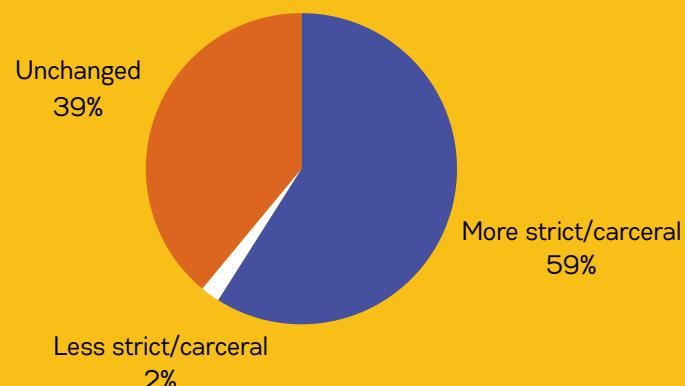
More than a third of respondents reported not knowing who their case manager is.

45% said Inside Safe has not offered any social services. “You would imagine that they would let you know about services they offer,” one participant shared.

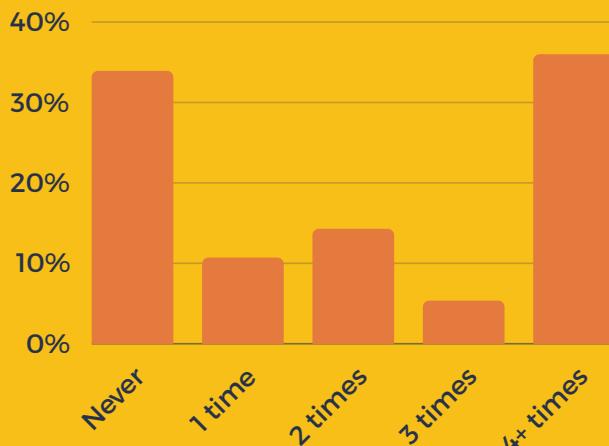
LIVING CONDITIONS

WE ASKED: HAVE THE RULES CHANGED SINCE YOU MOVED IN?

The majority of respondents reported **the rules at Inside Safe motels have become increasingly strict and carceral** since moving in. New rules bar participants from visiting each other's rooms, and "**prison-like**" **room checks** have resulted in violations of privacy and the trashing of participants' personal belongings.



WE ASKED: HAS THE FOOD THAT INSIDE SAFE SERVES MADE YOU FEEL ILL?



Two out of three respondents reported that the program's food has made them sick. Participants shared that **the "food is horrible"** and **"sometimes expired."**

36% of respondents **said the food has made them sick four or more times**, and one shared that she felt so ill that she felt she would have to go to the hospital.

The program has also failed to honor dietary restrictions based on participants' religious observance. "They don't respect religion with meals," one reported, saying they frequently serve pork. "You either eat it or you starve."

Inside Safe has undermined participants' attempts to prepare their own food, too. "They don't want us to cook. They took all of our food cooking appliances."

“

The food made me so sick I thought I had to go to the hospital.

”

INSIDE STARVING

When Inside Safe launched, the program didn't provide any food at some motels despite moving many people across the City, far from their support networks. This left many people in Inside Safe to starve. A coalition of program participants and community groups locked arms to form the Inside Starving campaign, demanding Mayor Bass take swift action to address starvation and other inhumane conditions created by her signature program. The campaign successfully pressured Inside Safe into serving food at some locations, but participants continue to report the poor quality of meals.

TESTIMONY FROM INSIDE

WE ASKED: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH INSIDE SAFE?

“

They were supposed to get us housing in 90 days. I've been here 7 months... Now they are writing me up and telling me my behavior is the reason why I'm getting kicked out when all I'm doing is asking questions.

”

“

They just kick people out without warning.

”

“

The new management is mean and cruel. They laughed in my face when I asked for help. So many people get kicked out all the time now it's not right.

”

“

The food made me so sick I thought I had to go to the hospital.

”

“

They never talk to us about housing. They don't treat us like human beings.

”

Not sure of the rules... Bad communication.

”

“

They made a lot of promises but have come through on very few.

”

“

They arbitrarily change the rules and play favorites. Some people get harsher treatment than others. They single people out.

”

“

The case managers are unprofessional. I've had five different case managers because there's so much turnover.

”

“

They made me change rooms multiple times for no reason even though no one new moved into my old room. The staff comes into my room while I'm sleeping.

”

TESTIMONY FROM INSIDE

WE ASKED: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH INSIDE SAFE?

“

They don't respect religion with meals. A lot of pork products. You either eat it or you starve.

“

Food is horrible...sometimes expired.

“

The program doesn't check in or update us on our housing status or what we need. We feel abandoned. It sucks.

“

The program's not working. They said they would help, but they don't. They're kicking everyone out.

“

Too isolating, not allowed to have anyone around, just us in a room by ourselves. We were given a different impression of what this program would be like when we moved here.

“

I'm under so much stress because the security situation over here. It's just ridiculous. They kicked my parents out.

“

The managers change a lot.

“

I'm starting to believe that the whole plan is not to get us housed... The staff look down on us most of the time. I don't think they think we're deserving of it—the housing.

“

Like being policed or in prison. We have to sign in and out and say where we're going.

“

I was better off living in a tent.

SUMMARY & ANALYSIS

The City of Los Angeles is home to an estimated **45,252 unhoused people**.¹

After **18 months** and **\$341 million**, Inside Safe **only houses 539 people**, including just 68 in permanent supportive housing.²

Inside Safe provides time-limited subsidies to the majority of people it has placed in housing. Those subsidies typically expire in one year. After that, tenants have to pay market-rate rent or face eviction. That's why **236 people placed in “permanent housing” by Inside Safe are no longer housed**.²

Permanent housing cannot be “time-limited” or unaffordable.

Inside Safe's budget is enough to cover a year's rent for more than 17,000 market-rate studio apartments in L.A., yet the program has “served” **just 2,767 people** with its significant resources.²

More than 30% of Inside Safe participants have already been **evicted or “exited.”²**

44 people have died in the program.²
This is unacceptable.

Despite these failures, elected officials frequently target encampments for Inside Safe operations before using **41.18**, a local “anti-camping” law, to **turn those locations into banishment zones in an attempt to prevent anyone from returning**.

Since its inception, the Mayor has claimed that Inside Safe is voluntary,³ but the City of L.A. criminalizes those who refuse Inside Safe's offer. When you look at the results of this community audit, it's easy to understand why anyone would be skeptical.

45,252

City of LA's estimated unhoused population as of Jan 2024¹

18 months

since Inside Safe launched

\$341M

program budget as of May 31, 2024²

539

people currently housed²

236

people placed into “permanent housing” who have since lost housing²

68

placed in permanent supportive housing²

842

“exited” the program²

44

died in Inside Safe²

3 in 4

survey respondents said Inside Safe hasn't provided mental health services

2 in 3

survey respondents said they don't know who their case manager is

¹ “2024 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count,” L.A. Homeless Services Authority Jun 27, 2024

² “Inside Safe Overview,” Controller's City of L.A. Homelessness Dashboard / “Inside Safe Report,” L.A. Homeless Services Authority June 10, 2024

³ “Amid heavy rain, Bass takes on a huge, long-standing homeless encampment in Venice,” L.A. Times Jan 11, 2023

SUMMARY & ANALYSIS

The results of the Community Audit show Inside Safe has **failed to deliver promised mental health and social services to the majority of the 1,313 people who were sheltered in its motels** when we administered the survey.¹ Case managers aren't working with the majority of participants to find housing. Conditions differ drastically between locations even when operated by the same case management company. The poor quality of the food is making people sick, and increasingly carceral conditions have transformed many motels into prison-like settings.

On June 28, 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling on **Grants Pass v. Johnson**,² trampling on the rights of every unhoused person in America with a decision that allows municipalities to **criminalize people for being too poor to afford a place to sleep**. Democrats like Governor Gavin Newsom applauded the conservative majority's opinion, which decided fining and jailing unhoused people without providing a place for them to go does not violate the Eighth Amendment's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment.

That same day, **seven L.A. City Councilmembers introduced a motion**, requesting the City Attorney provide analysis of the case's legal impact.³

The City of L.A. is preparing to expand its existing laws that banish and criminalize people for being poor, including those who live in vehicles and tents.

According to the Housing Department, **L.A. needs 267,365 affordable housing units to meet renters' needs but produces just 21,102 total units annually**.⁴ The crisis is growing, but people have nowhere to go.

LAHSA HOMELESS COUNT RESULTS

On June 28, 2024, Mayor Bass and many local officials celebrated LAHSA's 2024 Greater L.A. Homeless Count numbers, which reported a 2.2% drop in homelessness in the City of L.A.⁵ Some inaccurately attributed this drop to Inside Safe despite the program only housing 329 people (or 32.6% of the year-over-year difference) at the time of the count.⁶

Neither LAHSA nor any of the elected officials who celebrated these results mentioned how the data collected at the end of January 2024 fails to reflect the current reality of the crisis in our city.

Five days after LAHSA's Homeless Count, the City of L.A. terminated its COVID-19 eviction protections for non-payment of rent, creating a wave of evictions.⁷

The Housing Authority (HACLA) has delayed publishing data on 2024 evictions, but organizers saw a **drastic uptick in tenants facing eviction in February 2024**. Unfortunately, we will have to wait an entire year for data that more accurately reflects L.A.'s unhoused population without these eviction protections.

¹ "Inside Safe Report," L.A. Homeless Services Authority May 17, 2024

² "City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson," Supreme Court of the United States Jun 28, 2024

³ "Council File: 24-0140-S1," L.A. City Clerk Connect Jun 28, 2024

⁴ "Inside Safe Overview," Controller's City of L.A. Homelessness Dashboard / "Inside Safe Report," L.A. Homeless Services Authority Jun 10, 2024

⁵ "2024 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count Data," L.A. Homeless Services Authority Jun 27, 2024

⁶ "Inside Safe Report," L.A. Homeless Services Authority Jan 19, 2024

⁷ "Tenant Protections," L.A. City Attorney

SUMMARY & ANALYSIS

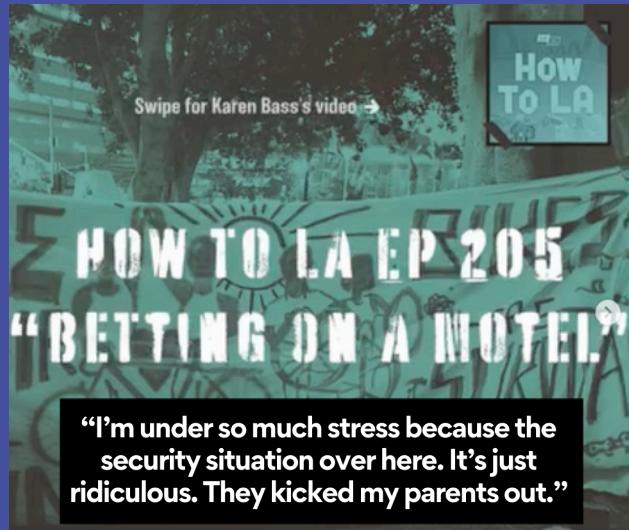
To create the perception of success, the Mayor's Office has released misleading reports that spin numbers and has publicized coercive testimony from participants when they first move into Inside Safe motels.

When we followed up with those same people months later, they shared stories of broken promises and inhumane conditions.

MOVE-IN DAY¹



2 MONTHS LATER²



MOVE-IN DAY³



8 MONTHS LATER⁴



¹ ["Noelia was one of the more than 50 Angelenos who voluntarily came inside...."](#) Mayor Karen Bass, Twitter Oct 31, 2023

² ["These are TWO MONTHS apart..."](#) Palms Unhoused Mutual Aid, Instagram Apr 7, 2024

³ ["Homelessness can happen to anyone..."](#) Mayor Karen Bass, Twitter Nov 6, 2023

⁴ ["Mayor Karen Bass, if this is your program, won't you make sure..."](#) Housing For Juanita, Instagram May 31, 2024

CALL TO ACTION

We call on Mayor Karen Bass and all Los Angeles City and County officials to stop misrepresenting Inside Safe. Stop wasting money on temporary fixes that leave vulnerable Angelenos in an endless cycle of poverty and housing insecurity.

We won't compile an exhaustive list of demands. Several coalitions that included Inside Safe participants have already published demand letters, hoping to improve the program (linked on page 12). Unfortunately, Mayor Bass refuses to lock arms with impacted communities—even as people continue to die in her program.

Instead, we offer obvious solutions. “Lock arms” to deliver the only proven method to address homelessness: **permanent, public housing.** Landlord greed created this crisis. Landlords will not be a part of the solution.

- **Raise the minimum wage to a living wage.**
- **Pass a rent freeze and eviction moratorium.**
- **Repeal 41.18. End sweeps. Stop banishing and criminalizing people for being poor.**
- **Invest in public housing solutions, including social housing.**

Mayor Bass must immediately **identify sites where public housing can be built and vacant buildings that can be seized and converted into housing.** Former L.A. Controller Ron Galperin already identified 26 such locations during his tenure,¹ so she knows where to start.

L.A. can't afford your complacency, Karen. People are dying.

We call on the public to hold Mayor Bass, L.A. City Council, and all public officials accountable.

Three years ago, L.A. City Council enacted the current version of **41.18, an inhumane and ineffective local law that criminalizes poverty in public spaces.**

During the Mayor's first year in office, the number of people arrested in 41.18 banishment zones more than doubled.²

When the Supreme Court issued its ruling on Grants Pass v. Johnson, L.A.'s liberal City Council didn't wait a single day before introducing a motion, seeking to determine how they could expand criminalization of unhoused people in our city.³

In recent months, Mayor Bass sold out our city to the LAPD,⁴ oversaw the police response that brutalized protestors,⁵ and sought the City Attorney's assistance in trying to strip Angelenos of our rights.⁶

Now, Bass and her allies feel more emboldened than ever to dehumanize and attempt to sweep away unhoused Angelenos. We need the public to pay attention and to fight back.

We call on journalists and media outlets to stop referring to “interim housing” as “housing.”

“Interim housing” is a euphemism for temporary shelter; housing is an apartment or a house with a lease. Conflating interim shelter with housing perpetuates misinformation about the status of this crisis.

INTERIM SHELTER ≠ HOUSING

¹ [“City Properties Available for Homeless Housing and Services: 26 Locations for Los Angeles to Explore Immediately,”](#) L.A. Controller Ron Galperin

² [“Summary & Analysis,”](#) Controller's 41.18 Arrests Map

³ [“Council File: 24-0140-S1,”](#) L.A. City Clerk Connect Jun 28, 2024

⁴ [“L.A. City Council signs off on police raises amid warnings of financial risk,”](#) L.A. Times Aug 23, 2023

⁵ [“Unacceptable: Why it took hours for police to quell attack at UCLA pro-Palestinian camp,”](#) L.A. Times May 1, 2024

⁶ [“Los Angeles's Mayor Was Contemplating a Mask Ban. She Just Got Covid.”](#) The Intercept Jun 28, 2024

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

PREVIOUS DEMAND LETTERS

[Open Letter from Aetna Street Residents to Mayor Bass' Office](#)

April 5, 2023

[Letter regarding Inside Safe operations from 17 community organizations, including housed and unhoused residents](#)

April 5, 2023

[Inside Starving Demands](#)

May 5, 2023

[Coalition Of Community Groups And Encampment Residents Condemn Actions Of Mayoral Team At Inside Safe Operations In Rampart Village](#)

October 13, 2023

[Support Residents in Demanding Effective Services from Inside Safe](#)

April 3, 2024

UNDERSTANDING INSIDE SAFE

[Controller's City of L.A. Homelessness Dashboard](#)

- [Inside Safe Overview](#)

[Controller's Inside Safe Audit Objectives](#)

[Housing For Juanita](#)

[Inside Starving](#)

[LAist's 'Inside Safe' coverage](#)

INTERIM SHELTER ≠ HOUSING

INTERIM SHELTER ≠ HOUSING