



December 24, 2020

President Norman Yee
Members, Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco CA, 94102

Re: File 201328 “Emergency Ordinance – Shelter in Place Hotels”

Dear President Yee and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

From the beginning of our pandemic, I have made clear my commitment that we prioritize stable housing exits for our homeless residents living in hotels. I know the members of the Board unanimously share this goal. Through this Emergency Ordinance, the Board of Supervisors has directed a policy shift to use more resources for temporary shelter. As I sign this legislation, I want to acknowledge the moral dilemma and very real tradeoffs in this policy shift.

We have laid out an ambitious plan to get each of the 2,300 hotel guests into permanent supportive housing, or to provide them with rental subsidies to get them back on their feet. By spreading this process over the next nine months, the City can ensure that each client has the resources needed to move into safe and sustainable housing. I appreciate the Board’s engagement on that plan, commitment to accountability, and willingness to fund the first phases of the plan.

This Emergency Ordinance expands our SIP hotel program away from COVID response, and asks us to use the hotels as part of our portfolio of temporary shelter. While FEMA dollars remain available, SIP hotels are among the most cost effective shelter options. However, once FEMA funding expires, we run into the same cliff – a high per-night cost at the City’s expense, no resources for additional rehousing, and no runway to identify those housing exits. While we have received some recent positive assurances regarding FEMA reimbursements for this program, they are not guaranteed. Neither is the timeline for the overall emergency period.

This means that as we fill our SIP hotels, we must acknowledge the very real possibility that we may be returning people back to the streets once FEMA funding is over. Backfilling means that we may not have the time, the resources to find a meaningful exit to homelessness.

In the cold winter months, and particularly during a COVID surge with community spread, we will continue to do what we can to bring people indoors safely through all options available.

Finally, I want to be clear that the Board’s decision to expand our hotel program jeopardizes our commitment to finding everyone stable housing. I look forward to working with the Board through the coming months to ensure health and stability for our unhoused residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "London N. Breed".

Mayor London N. Breed