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September 2, 2022

The Honorable Judge Wendy Getty
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

RE: Response to 2021-2022 Grand Jury Report Entitled: "Shelter Solano, Inc. A Review of its First Three Years Operating an Emergency Shelter in Solano County"

Dear Honorable Judge Getty:

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 (c) and 933.05, the Solano County Administrator's Office (CAO) is responding to the following findings and recommendations contained in the Grand Jury report that pertain to matters related to the County Administrator's Office.

It is important to note that Shelter Solano, Inc. ("SSI") is an independent, private non-profit and is not a division of the County of Solano ("County"). As such, the County has no authority to control its operations aside from mutually agreed upon contractual obligations. Also, while the County Administrator's Office is required to respond to certain findings in the report, it does not have legal authority to implement many of the recommendations contained therein. Such status will be reflected in the responses in this document.

Finding 1

Shelter Solano, Inc's lack of unrestricted funding prevents the shelter from operating at capacity.

Response to Finding 1

The Solano County Administrator disagrees with this finding.

As noted above, SSI is an independent, private non-profit and is not a division of the County and as such, the County has no information to determine whether unrestricted funding would allow the shelter to operate at full capacity, particularly since many of its funding sources do require an agreed upon number of beds be reserved for clients of those specific programs or other agencies. Without these funding sources, SSI might not be able to maintain operations at the current level and consequently might potentially be unable to serve any unhoused individuals in the county.

The County has no authority to control SSI's operations aside from mutually agreed upon contractual obligations. Additionally, due to the critical nature of some of the programs supported by the funding sources, such as Solano County Behavioral Health, having beds available provides critical stabilization to individuals served by these programs. Therefore, the County has no intention of modifying its contract to remove this restriction.

Recommendation 1A

Local agency partners associated with Shelter Solano, Inc. must assist acquiring funding streams that increase the number of unrestricted beds.

Response to Recommendation 1A

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

The County is aware of the need for an increase in housing opportunities for unhoused individuals throughout the county and a number of efforts are currently underway to develop a variety of housing options for the unhoused population, such as permanent supportive housing units and navigation centers. Funding for additional unrestricted beds is one potential interim housing option but it is not within the County's sole authority to decide what priority funding for this housing option should be given. Additionally, many of the typical sources of funding to address homelessness, such as federal and state funding, no longer fund shelters, having transitioned focus of their resources to permanent supportive housing instead. It is the County's priority to acquire additional funding streams for the full spectrum of housing opportunities for the unhoused, not just unrestricted shelter beds.

Recommendation 1B

Local agency partners adopt a regionalized service delivery and funding model that does not restrict bed usage based on a bed-night rate agreement with the county and/or donor city, but rather allows access to beds based on client need regardless of the city of origin and works toward reducing the number of homeless living on the streets.

Response to Recommendation 1B

This recommendation for a regionalized service delivery has been implemented and the remainder of the recommendation for a funding model that does not restrict bed usage will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

The County is a member of the CAP Solano JPA and actively participates in its efforts to assist in the guidance and expansion of regionalized opportunities to house the unhoused throughout the county. Current efforts are underway to change the membership of the CAP Solano governing board to include representatives from each member agency's legislative body to allow for a greater focus on regional efforts.

As noted in the response to Recommendation 1A, certain funding sources have transitioned their focus away from shelter beds to permanent supportive housing. The County is working with the CAP Solano JPA and its member agencies to develop regional strategies to reduce the number of unsheltered individuals, which may include unrestricted bed usage as one strategy.

Finding 5

There is a lack of metrics and comprehensive data collection to inform decision-making, to monitor and measure program efficacy and performance, as well as outcomes across the homeless service continuum.

Response to Finding 5

The Solano County Administrator partially disagrees with this finding.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all agencies that receive federal funding for the provision of homeless services enter data into a computer system known as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Each Continuum of Care is responsible for selecting an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards. However, the data, once collected, cannot be modified to reflect local conditions and some modifications could be beneficial to service providers and the community as a whole to better understand needs and outcomes in the county. The County does not have the authority to require that all agencies providing services to the unhoused in the county report based on a more regionalized basis, and if an agency does not receive federal funding, there is no requirement, and the County cannot require, that the agency report at all.

Recommendation 5

Across the continuum of services, develop metrics to measure and monitor program efficacy, performance and outcomes, to include a transparent system of reporting.

Response to Recommendation 5

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

As noted in the response to Finding 5, there is an HMIS system in place in the county to record HUD-required data to comply with management and reporting standards and the County does not have the authority to require additional reporting across the continuum of services.

Finding 6

Despite improved collaboration between the service providers, funders, municipal government, and county, there remains a lack of an overall leadership role/authority.

Response to Finding 6

The Solano County Administrator partially disagrees with this finding.

The County agrees that a coordinated leadership effort between the incorporated cities and the County would be of great benefit to the work of providing services to the unhoused, but no single

entity has the authority to undertake such a role. However, the County has recently been engaged in meeting with all the cities in the county to modify the membership of the CAP Solano JPA Board of Directors to consist of elected officials from each jurisdiction's governing body. Having a Board comprised of policymakers throughout the county will greatly assist in developing more countywide solutions to remove barriers to housing the unhoused.

Recommendation 6A

Overall leadership with authority to address homelessness is required to provide direction, ensure timely coordination of services, demand accountability, and liaison with the community.

Response to Recommendation 6A

This recommendation has been implemented.

As noted in the response to Finding 6 above, the County has recently been facilitating an effort to modify the membership of the CAP Solano JPA Board of Directors to consist of elected officials from each jurisdiction's governing body. Having a Board comprised of policymakers throughout the county will greatly assist in developing more countywide solutions to remove barriers to housing the unhoused.

Recommendation 6B

All stakeholders request the county provide the leadership, authority, and accountability to ensure timely coordination of services delivered in the most efficient, effective manner.

Response to Recommendation 6B

This recommendation has been implemented in part.

As mentioned above, under the County's leadership, the CAP Solano JPA Board of Directors is in the process of being reconstituted to be comprised of elected officials from all incorporated cities and the County, and once reconstituted, the new CAP Solano Board will then provide the authority and accountability to ensure the timely coordination of services.

Finding 7

The SCCGJ found no evidence that CAP Solano, JPA is registered as a public agency with the State of California or Solano County as required.

Response to Finding 7

The Solano County Administrator partially disagrees with this finding since Solano County has no direct knowledge of what the SCCGJ did or did not find in its investigation.

Recommendation 7

CAP Solano, JPA file the necessary forms with the State of California and Solano County and consistently meet filing requirements.

Response to Recommendation 7

This recommendation will not be implemented by the County because it is not warranted since it is beyond the scope of the County's authority and should be addressed to the CAP Solano, JPA.

Finding 8

The public is unaware of the volume of money coming into Solano County to address the homeless issue.

Response to Finding 8

The Solano County Administrator disagrees partially with this finding in that there are many different sources of funding, including private donations, that would make it quite difficult to track the total volume of funds coming into Solano County to provide homeless solutions. As it pertains to the County's expenditures on homeless solutions, the County's budget is fully accessible and transparent in terms of funds in the Budget directed to homeless solutions.

Recommendation 8

CAP Solano, JPA should create a dashboard disclosing the money coming into Solano County; how it is used, by whom, and their return on investment (program outcomes).

Response to Recommendation 8

This recommendation will not be implemented by the County because it is not warranted since it is beyond the scope of the County's authority and should be addressed to the CAP Solano, JPA.

Finding 9

Feedback from multiple stakeholders and document review during the SCCGJ's investigation revealed that CES is not currently providing the expected services.

Response to Finding 9

The Solano County Administrator disagrees with this finding as it is not warranted since it is beyond the scope of the County's authority and should be addressed to the CAP Solano, JPA.

Recommendation 9A

The appropriate authority assesses Resource Connect's current state of operations to identify its readiness to provide the expected services in a user-friendly, timely manner that reduces the long waitlists currently in place.

Response to Recommendation 9A

This recommendation will not be implemented by the County because it is not warranted since it is beyond the scope of the County's authority and should be addressed to the JPA.

Recommendation 9B

Create a post-assessment strategy to move Resource Connect towards operating at a level that meets standard expectations for their role.

Response to Recommendation 9B

This recommendation will not be implemented by the County because it is not warranted since it is beyond the scope of the County's authority and should be addressed to the JPA.

Finding 10

Lack of housing makes it difficult for individuals to successfully graduate out of Shelter Solano, Inc. into permanent housing as required by the Housing First Delivery Model used in Solano County.

Response to Finding 10

The Solano County Administrator partially disagrees with this finding.

The County agrees that there is an inadequate amount of affordable housing units in Solano County, and this creates challenges when trying to provide services to the unhoused, but there are many reasons why individuals do not successfully transition into permanent housing.

Recommendation 10A

To successfully address homelessness in Solano County requires that the county and cities work together to secure housing in their respective communities.

Response to Recommendation 10A

This recommendation is in the process of being implemented.

As noted above, CAP Solano Board of Directors is in the process of being reorganized which will allow for greater collaboration amongst jurisdictions.

In addition, the Solano County Board of Supervisors has recently allocated nearly \$11 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds towards the creation of new affordable housing units within the county, some in partnership with cities within the county. The County also has a designated staff person in the County Administrator's Office dedicated to working on housing projects and programs to continue efforts to facilitate the development of additional new affordable housing units within the county, including the pending Solano County Housing Trust Fund as recently authorized by the Board of Supervisors.

Recommendation 10B

Engagement and education of the general public around homelessness is required to gain the public's understanding, trust, and input in supporting the county's homeless residents.

Response to Recommendation 10B

The County agrees with this recommendation conceptually, although it is unclear if it will be effective in increasing support for the homeless.

Finding 12

Direct observation and feedback received during Shelter Solano, Inc. site visit revealed shelter maintenance has been neglected.

Response to Finding 12

The Solano County Administrator disagrees with this finding because the County has no recent direct knowledge of the condition of the shelter structure or what the SCCGJ observed during their visit.

Recommendation 12A

Adoption of a Regional Service Delivery model in Solano County that stabilizes funding to consistently meet operational needs.

Response to Recommendation 12A

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

As noted in other responses above, the proposed modifications to the membership of the CAP Solano JPA Board of Directors by having a Board comprised of policymakers throughout the county will greatly assist in developing more countywide solutions to remove barriers to housing the unhoused. A regional service delivery model would be a suitable endeavor for the new Board.

Additionally, the County, and several of the cities within the county, have adopted the Regional Impact Council's Regional Action Plan, which consists of a 1-2-4 framework. This framework

supports decreasing the number of unhoused individuals by planning that for every 1 unit of interim housing to bring people indoors, 2 units of permanent housing solutions and 4 units of homelessness prevention are created to stem the increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness. This framework is the beginning of a potential countywide strategy to better address the challenges of reducing the number of unhoused individuals.

Recommendation 12B

Scheduled maintenance becomes a high priority budget item as funding streams stabilize.

Response to Recommendation 12B

This recommendation requires further analysis.

The County has a contract with SSI to provide services to the unhoused but no direct authority over the shelter's day-to-day operations. Further analysis would be needed as well as discussions with SSI to determine the best method to ensure the shelter structure is adequately maintained.

Finding 13

Direct observation, document review, and feedback during the Solano County Civil Grand Jury investigation revealed gaps in service delivery along the entire continuum of services.

Response to Finding 13

The Solano County Administrator disagrees partially with this finding. The subject of this report is "homelessness and Shelter Solano, Inc's role in serving the homeless community" and does not appear to have included a full review of the entire continuum of care in the county.

Recommendation 13A

The county secures a comprehensive independent assessment across the continuum of homeless services to include:

- Leadership
- Level of collaboration among stakeholders
- Funding
- How services are accessed
- Quality of services provided
- Measurement of outcomes
- Mechanism to ensure accountability
- Transparency of reporting

Response to Recommendation 13A

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

As noted in other responses above, proposed modifications to the membership of the CAP Solano JPA Board of Directors to consist of elected officials from each jurisdiction's governing body will elevate the Board's priority level guidance and initiative. Having a Board comprised of policymakers throughout the county will greatly assist in developing more countywide solutions to remove barriers to housing the unhoused. A comprehensive independent assessment across the continuum of homeless services would be a suitable endeavor for the new Board.

While the County did contract with an independent consultant to conduct an initial review and assessment of affordable housing efforts in Solano County and provide comments and assist in formulating recommendations on the County's approach to affordable housing in 2019, it is not the County's sole responsibility to ensure the continuum of services has no gaps, but rather should be done in partnership with the cities within the county. Additionally, this task may be better suited to the CAP Solano JPA.

Recommendation 13B

The county develops a strategic plan that includes a timeline for the implementation of recommendations from the independent assessment in recommendation 13A.

Response to Recommendation 13B

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

As noted in other responses above, it is not the County's sole responsibility to ensure the continuum of services has no gaps, but rather should be done in partnership with the cities within the county. Additionally, this task may be better suited to the CAP Solano JPA.

Finding 14

A document review conducted by the Solano County Civil Grand Jury revealed discrepancies and inconsistent accounting and reporting practices among the entities providing services to the homeless in Solano County.

Response to Finding 14

The Solano County Administrator disagrees wholly with this finding as to the extent this finding relates to the County and has no ability to comment on any entity outside of the contract and/or control of the County.

Recommendation 14A

Entities use a consistent reporting mechanism for the awarding of funding to keep the community informed and assured that the money is being spent effectively and as intended.

Response to Recommendation 14A

This recommendation has already been implemented.

Currently the CAP Solano JPA posts grant awards that the JPA issues on its website, and outcomes and budgets are discussed at the monthly meetings, which are open to members of the public to attend.

Recommendation 14B

County performs or hires a Forensic Accountant to perform a Forensic Audit of money being spent across the continuum of homeless services in Solano County.

Response to Recommendation 14B

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not the County's sole authority or responsibility to ensure the continuum of services has no gaps, but rather should be done in partnership with the cities within the county. Additionally, this task may be better suited to Housing First Solano, the Continuum of Care that operates within the county, or through the new CAP Solano JPA Board of Directors.

Sincerely,



Bill Emlen,
County Administrator

Cc: Board of Supervisors