

From: Miriam Raftery <editor@eastcountymagazine.org>

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To: 'presslist2@DOJ.CA.GOV' <presslist2@DOJ.CA.GOV>

Subject: Media questions: Attorney General Bonta Demands City of El Cajon Immediately Rescind Warning Notices Sent to Hotels Participating in San Diego County's Voucher Program for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Please ask AG Bonta to read this.

His action is shocking to me, as an award-winning member of the media who has tracked homeless issues in our region for decades. I don't believe he has all the facts and would like to provide some context for him.

Poor El Cajon already has more homeless than any city in our region (except the city of San Diego) and has its own programs to help them that have put 800 homeless people into permanent housing since 2020. You may not know that El Cajon's City Council is extremely unusual in its compassion for the homeless. Did you know that the Mayor headlined his 2nd benefit concert for the homeless last month, playing saxophone and piano, raising many thousands of dollars to support a transitional living center funded by El Cajon? Did you know that two Councilmembers were formerly homeless themselves? And another Councilmember volunteers to help homeless people, and the last Councilmember has taken homeless people into his own home, letting them stay in his spare bedrooms while they get back on their feet? Yet they are being treated like bad people here, all for wanting to keep drug dealing and other crimes, as well as fire hazards, off their streets and out of their motels. Their city has the 2nd busiest fire department per capita in the nation, and one of the busiest police departments. Did you know that El Cajon is the only city in our entire county, other than the city of San Diego, that provides major funding to a shelter in its city limits, as well as many other programs of its own to help the homeless?

But now the county has been taking its worst of the worst – homeless people who include multiple convicted felony drug dealers and even people with outstanding criminal warrants and putting them into these hotels - many are homeless people from OUTSIDE El Cajon and these folks are causing big crime problems for ECPD with no money or help from the county. Some have been caught selling drugs openly in front of the hotels, threatened the city manager with violence and reportedly threatening passersby. Many of those there on vouchers stole or destroyed smoke detectors, smoking drugs and lighting up propane stoves in motel rooms, which poses a fire hazard to everyone in the hotel or nearby. The city went to great effort a few years ago to bring in nice hotels to improve the city, and had set a limit of 25% that could be used to temporarily house the homeless. Why aren't we seeing elegant hotels at the beaches being ordered to be filled up with homeless? It's discriminatory against inland and less affluent cities. El Cajon has more motels in the county's voucher program than any other city in the county by far – more than twice as many as any other, and was not even informed about this. Why not force the county to more equitably distribute its

homeless and find a better way to deal with those who are drug dealers and wanted felons?

Why isn't the state or county providing any help to El Cajon to deal with the rising crime problems created by this program instead of sticking the city with the bill for crime problems caused by criminals among the homeless that are being brought in by deputies from elsewhere and dropped off in El Cajon? 35% are from other cities and 65% are El Cajon, but that includes the unincorporated areas as well as the city. Unincorporated is county land and the county won't disclose how many if any were from the city of El Cajon. Meanwhile the County has done next to nothing to get people out of camping along riverbeds in its unincorporated areas such as Lakeside and Spring Valley; proposals to build homeless shelters in those areas got blocked because those county residents objected. How is it fair for the county's solution to its homeless problem to be telling its deputies to drop them off at motels in El Cajon?

This seems like a terrible miscarriage of justice here. What is the AG's office going to do to protect public safety and be sure El Cajon doesn't have to spend their taxpayers money to hire more police to resolve problems that are being caused by the county dumping homeless from elsewhere into these hotels? And how is it harassment to search for drugs that were found when drug dealing was personally observed outside the motel by the city manager? This resulted in rearrests. Doesn't the state care about getting drug dealers and another who had illegal guns out of this program?

I'm an award-winning journalist with over 400 major awards. Our site averages 10 million hits a month and a quarter million visits a month. I've been reporting on the homeless problems in San Diego's East County for decades.

El Cajon has done by the far the most of the 4 cities out here and much more than the county has ever done. They fund shelters and a transitional living program recently approved building tiny homes for homeless women, pay to reunite homeless with family elsewhere, and have their own motel voucher program but theirs provides security and oversight – the county's does not. The county simply creates problems for others. While a voucher program can be a good thing, it's been abused terribly by the county here by allowing convicted serious offenders and even people with active arrest warrants into the program. What are you going to do to stop that? And why is East County always the dumping ground for everything nobody else wants – from sex offenders (virtually all the sexually violent predators in our county are in East County) to the criminal element among the homeless. That is NOT to imply that all homeless are criminals; most are not and deserve help. But this program is a nightmare for El Cajon residents, taxpayers and officials.

Please provide a detailed response. I would also be happy to interview Attorney General Bonta on this issue, but it seems to me that he is going after the wrong people here with zero research into the situation other than whatever the county claimed .

Will the AG rescind this misguided order and instead take action to force the county to be more equitable in its homeless voucher motel program?

Miriam Raftery, Editor and Founder

www.EastCountyMagazine.org

619 698 7617

editor@eastcountymagazine.org