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Regional Leaders Call for Transparency and Regional Sharing in Homelessness Outcomes Data

Recommended contract provisions would grant public access to anonymized data to evaluate effectiveness

San Diego, CA (September 6, 2023) – Today, a region-wide group of elected officials and the San Diego County Taxpayers Association called on all public agencies to automatically share data across jurisdictional boundaries and for the Regional Task Force on Homelessness to be more transparent with the public. Specifically, these regional leaders demanded that RTFH provide public agencies the data for taxpayer-funded homeless service programs.

These leaders share the Taxpayers Association’s concern about the homelessness crisis in San Diego, as well as the high financial cost it has had for taxpayers.

This group of leaders believe taxpayers have a right to know how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent to solve this crisis. Public leaders have a duty to help the public understand whether their tax dollars are being spent efficiently and effectively.

As such, the Taxpayers Association was disheartened to learn that the Regional Task Force on Homelessness, which houses all data on homelessness services in their Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), is not required to share client data with public agencies funding service programs. Many public agencies are therefore unable to conduct program evaluations and understand what is working and what is not. SDCTA therefore recommends that public agencies include, in their contracts with homelessness service providers, a requirement that the contractor automatically consent to have programmatic data shared.

“Taxpayers have spent hard-earned tax dollars on homelessness services to help our most vulnerable San Diego residents,” said Dane White, mayor of the city of Escondido. “I want the region’s taxpayer dollars to be used wisely, and the RTFH should be forward leaning and give us data without question or hesitation. To withhold information is undemocratic and strips my constituents of their right to understand the impact of their tax dollars. And as someone who has been homeless, I always want to ensure that we are investing in programs that benefit all taxpayers.”

Public agencies will benefit from these contractual provisions recommended by the Taxpayers Association as these provisions will provide data necessary for the public to evaluate the relative efficacy and efficiency of programs they contract and fund. Staffs at public agencies with whom SDCTA has been in contact have expressed support for such a policy and agree that, as funders in homelessness services



programs, they should be able to evaluate the programs which they fund and that this data is essential to do so.

The Association also called on homeless service providers to voluntarily share program data in HMIS with the public agencies who fund them.

“The public – not the service providers – own the data produced through taxpayer-funded programs,” said Haney Hong, president and CEO of the Taxpayers Association. “If you’re a service provider and confident in your work, you should also be forward leaning and ask RTFH to pass to public agencies the data you’ve produced!”

The Association and regional leaders collectively stated their desire that taxpayer funds go to the best performers. Maximizing the funds that pay for crisis management will also allow for more taxpayer funds to go to prevention, including critically needed housing.

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San Diego County Taxpayers Association (SDCTA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, dedicated to promoting accountable, cost-effective, and efficient government and opposing unnecessary new taxes and fees. Since 1945, SDCTA has served as “San Diego’s Taxpayer Watchdog Group” by educating the public and helping save the region’s citizens millions of dollars. Public opinion polls consistently rate SDCTA as the most “influential” and “trusted” public policy institution in San Diego. For more information, please visit www.sdcta.org, @sdcta on Twitter/ Facebook/ Instagram, call 619-234-6423, or email info@sdcta.org.