

November 16, 2020

**Project Roomkey Rehousing Fiscal Update:
California Department of Social Services**

Project Roomkey utilized federal Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) and FEMA cost-sharing to provide safe, non-congregate shelter in hotel and motel rooms for at-risk individuals experiencing homelessness, such as people over the age of 65 or who have certain underlying health conditions, during the pandemic. Since it began in March 2020, Project Roomkey has successfully provided interim housing for 23,000 individuals. Currently, there are approximately 10,700 individuals in a Roomkey unit, after accounting for those who have exited from completing their quarantine period or transitioned to a more stable placement. Per the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, CRF can only be utilized for costs incurred through December 30, 2020. Once this funding lapses, it is estimated that approximately 4,000 individuals living in Project Roomkey units may lose their shelter which could result in a significant public health crisis, just as COVID-19 cases are increasing statewide.

The Administration plans to immediately direct \$62 million one-time funds from the Disaster Response-Emergency Operations Account to prevent these evictions from occurring and to continue meeting FEMA cost-sharing obligations. When the Legislature returns, further consideration should be given to more permanent solutions for this population. The following is the Administration's strategy to quickly provide a narrow and tailored amount of resources to maintain the safety of current Project Roomkey occupants during the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis.

- **Project Roomkey Operations and Rehousing**—\$59 million
 - Continued operations funding which will allow time for each community to develop a rehousing plan so no occupant is forced to exit into unsheltered homelessness.
 - Rehousing funding to develop and implement plans to transition individuals from Project Roomkey sites into permanent housing. Costs include rental subsidies, case management, housing navigation, and landlord incentives.
- **Technical Assistance**—\$3 million to contract with experienced housing providers to deploy housing specialists and provide intensive technical assistance to help communities create plans for the permanent rehousing of all Project Roomkey occupants.

The Department of Social Services plans to immediately allocate funding to counties and tribes participating in Project Roomkey by utilizing the same process it used for the initial \$50 million in COVID-19 emergency funding, on a per unit basis for these approximately 4,000 individuals. This funding will allow counties and tribes to maintain thousands of individuals currently being served in Project Roomkey hotels and motels. Acting urgently on these resources will avoid the eviction of vulnerable individuals into unsheltered homelessness.