

SUBJECT: What Father Joe's Villages Hopes to Hear at the San Diego State of the County Address

On Wednesday, Feb. 21, San Diego County Board of Supervisors Chair Nora Vargas will give her annual State of the County address to outline the county's priorities for the year. During her address, Vargas will likely discuss the impact of the recent historic floods, implementation of a new countywide street health program, and more.

Please consider the following statement from Deacon Jim Vargas, president and CEO at Father Joe's Villages:

"Homelessness is a crisis that we can solve if we work together, continue our momentum and invest in programs that meet families and individuals experiencing homelessness exactly where they are.

We urge the County of San Diego to continue to invest in both short-term and long-term solutions to homelessness. Wraparound services that help those experiencing homelessness achieve stability are key, and so are initiatives that help people in need maintain their physical, behavioral and mental health.

This includes exploring a regional street health initiative modeled after one operated by Father Joe's Villages, outreach to meet people where they're at, harm reduction principles to combat the ongoing fentanyl crisis and other behavioral and mental health treatment initiatives, such as those that could be supported by California's Proposition 1. Healthcare is even more important in the wake of natural disasters, like the recent storms we saw in January.

For many, poor physical, behavioral and mental health is a significant barrier to overcoming homelessness. With the right strategies and approach, we can remove this obstacle for our neighbors in need."

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For interviews with Deacon Jim Vargas, available before or after the State of the City Address, please contact Mike Peterson at mike@gomixte.com or (619) 732-0789 x 645.

SUBJECT: Father Joe's Villages' Statement on the San Diego State of the County Address

On Wednesday, Feb. 21, San Diego County Board of Supervisors Chair Nora Vargas delivered her annual State of the County address. She spoke about recent storms, progress made toward ending homelessness, and additional plans for how the county can combat the growing crisis.

Please consider the following statement from Deacon Jim Vargas, president and CEO at Father Joe's Villages:

"During her State of the County address, Chairwoman Nora Vargas reaffirmed San Diego County's belief that housing is a fundamental human right and its commitment to addressing homelessness through initiatives that care for the mental, physical and behavioral health of people experiencing homelessness.

We are hopeful in the initiatives of Chairwoman Vargas, such as plans to increase San Diego's mental health services and her office's support for Proposition 1, which would allocate \$6.83 billion in bonds to build mental health and substance use disorder treatment facilities."

Additionally, we are also happy to hear about plans to unlock additional funding to build more affordable housing in our region at a faster rate. We see the County's track record on this, including last year's Removing Barriers to Housing initiative, and we look to the momentum toward our region becoming 'pro housing.'

We appreciate our continuing partnership with San Diego County to help prevent and end homelessness, one life at a time."

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