Benioff Homelessness
and Housing Initiative

UCSF
University of California
San Francisco

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UCSF Statement by Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative Director Margot Kushel, MD, on 2024 Point-In-Time Homeless Count

SAN FRANCISCO (December 28, 2024) – Following is a statement by Dr. Margot Kushel, MD, Director of the Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative (BHHI) at the University of California, San Francisco, on the 2024 Annual Homeless Assessment Report, released December 27 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Dr. Kushel is the principal investigator of The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness (CASPEH), the largest representative study of homelessness in the U.S. since the 1990s. Released in 2023, CASPEH provides a comprehensive analysis of homelessness in California and offers policy recommendations to address its root causes.

"The 2024 Point-in-Time Count reveals a deeply concerning reality: homelessness across nearly all populations has reached record highs, with an 18% increase compared with 2023. As CASPEH (The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness) and countless other studies have shown, homelessness is fundamentally a housing problem—one exacerbated by skyrocketing rents, stagnant incomes, and systemic inequities. Proven solutions, mainly the expansion of affordable and subsidized housing, paired with appropriate services offered on a Housing First basis, are the solution to homelessness. In contrast, policies that criminalize homelessness exacerbate trauma, waste resources, and fail to solve the crisis.

"The 2024 PIT found that families with children experienced the largest surge, with homelessness rising by 39% since last year, reflecting the impacts of dwindling pandemic-era protections and an intensifying affordable housing crisis. The count reveals that homelessness doesn't fall equally across populations: Black and Indigenous Americans remain disproportionately impacted. While Black Americans make up 12% of the population, they make up 32% of those experiencing homelessness. These findings are devastating yet tragically predictable without the policies needed to address the root causes of homelessness.

"Homelessness among veterans declined by 8%. Veterans are the only group for whom we have adequately scaled the evidence-based response: Housing First, or housing subsidies paired with appropriate services. This progress highlights that we

know how to address homelessness but must scale it adequately. We must do the same for other populations.

"Homelessness in California saw a three percent increase in the last year to 187,084. This increase is lower than the national trend, but the enormous number of people experiencing homelessness in California reflects the ongoing crisis caused by the lack of affordable housing in California.

"This year's data makes clear that the path forward requires urgent and sustained investments in affordable and subsidized housing, funding for supportive services, coordination between sectors, and zoning reform. We must act now to ensure that every population has access to the housing and support needed to thrive. If we can achieve progress for veterans even amid worsening conditions, we can—and must— extend these solutions to all who need them. Homelessness is solvable, and we cannot afford further delay."

About UCSF BHHI
The UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative (BHHI) provides accurate, timely policy-oriented research about homelessness for local, state, and national policymakers and practitioners. Funded by a generous gift from Marc and Lynne Benioff and based at the UCSF Division of Health Equity and Society, UCSF BHHI is a trusted source for evidence-based practice, policy, and scalable solutions—turning evidence into action to prevent and end homelessness.

Media requests can be directed to BHHIMedia@ucsf.edu.

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