



Cheryl Davila
Councilmember
District 2

CONSENT CALENDAR
September 22, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Cheryl Davila

Subject: Providing our Unhoused Communities in the City of Berkeley with Potable Water and addressing Water Insecurity

RECOMMENDATION

1. Adopt a Resolution approving the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$250 per Councilmember including \$500 from Councilmember Cheryl Davila, to help pay for the procurement of water bottles to be given to our unhoused residents and communities, using funds relinquished to the City's General Fund for this purpose from the discretionary Council Office Budgets of Councilmember Davila, the Mayor and any other Councilmembers who would like to contribute.
2. Refer to City Manager to include an allocation in the upcoming AAO budget to use existing homeless services to fund Berkeley Free Clinic's program to address water insecurity among Berkeley's unhoused communities. This program will initially require \$10,000 to construct and maintain a large tank with a foot pump for dispensing water from a spout that can be used for drinking or handwashing.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the City of Berkeley spent close to \$20 million on providing homeless services. This budget came together from different sources: about \$6.5 million from the general fund, about \$9.5 million from regional, state, and federal funds and \$3.9 million were one-time funds from the state's Homeless Emergency Aid Program.

Amidst a variety of public health crises including a pandemic, economic recession, and a series of raging fires, the unhoused community of Berkeley battles severe water insecurity, rendering them more susceptible to adverse health outcomes such as heat stroke, lung disease and weakened immunity. This is in addition to an exacerbation of unemployment rates, which are disproportionately high among unhoused individuals. The City must close this inequitable gap in water accessibility in order to avoid overburdening other city services with issues catalyzed by contaminated water.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic and the raging fires and smoke in the State of California are posing serious obstacles for all residents, but especially for Berkeley's unhoused communities. The economic challenges of businesses closing, financial strains and health concerns are increasing in our City, which leads to more disparities. It is necessary to support our communities who cannot buy basic necessities for survival such as potable water.

On any given night, more than 1,000 Berkeley residents do not have shelter (i.e. living outdoors in tents, on sidewalks or in vehicles) according to the [Alameda County 2019 Point-In-Time Count](#). A growing number of residents are housing insecure and at risk of becoming homeless. A majority of unhoused Berkeley residents are people of color, seniors and disabled. But the unsheltered population also includes families with children, UC Berkeley students, and residents living in tents and vehicles, which are not counted in the [2019 numbers](#).

Consider the Homeless, a Berkeley based non-profit organization, has been providing access to potable water that would be otherwise unavailable to unhoused residents. Consider the Homeless has been responding to the alarming lack of access to clean water, spending \$1,500 a month to provide 2400 water bottles. But now, the non-profit is out of funds to continue this service. The City has been receiving a supply of water from Alameda County, but can only secure 250 bottles a week. Alameda County has also announced that they will stop providing water bottles soon. Safe drinking water is an integral natural resource for human life and the health of our unhoused communities.

However, in the long run, plastic water bottles are neither a sustainable nor budget-friendly solution to the issue of water insecurity. Therefore, the city must take responsibility for this crisis and invest in long term solutions for the sake of our community and the environment. Community groups such as Berkeley Free Clinic (BFC) have devised solutions to bring an end to the crisis but require funding to move forward. We ask that the City fully fund BFC's water solution program to ensure that half measures do not exacerbate the issue and cost the city more in the long run.

The Berkeley Free Clinic (BFC) will build life-saving water infrastructure that will adequately provide long term access to clean water for people who are unhoused with proper funding. BFC's proposal requires \$900 to set up each site, \$115/week to maintain each site that will include a large tank with a foot pump for dispensing water from a spout that can be used for drinking or handwashing. \$10,000 is necessary for the program to continue past September and to expand to four drinking water sites in Berkeley for a few more months. Fully funding the water project is essential to ensure that half-measures do not exacerbate the issue and cost the City more in the long run. Investing in basic needs will greatly diminish negative health outcomes associated with non-potable water and reduce the burden on other services the city provides. Water insecurity is an emergent problem that the city must immediately address.

We need a reliable solution that ensures safe and sustainable access to clean drinking water for all of our community members. It is the duty of the City to ensure the safety of ALL residents, especially during these hard times.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

\$500 is available from Councilmember Cheryl Davila's Council Office Budget discretionary account (011-11-102-000-0000-000-411).

Use of existing homeless services to fully fund Berkeley Free Clinic's program to address water insecurity among Berkeley's unhoused communities will initially cost \$10,000.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Protecting our communities during this climate and health crisis is an act of environmental sustainability.

CONTACT PERSONS

Cheryl Davila
Councilmember District 2
510.981.7120

cdavila@cityofberkeley.info

Sanjita Pamidimukkala
Eshal Sandhu
District 2 Interns

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA,
PROVIDING OUR UNHOUSED COMMUNITIES WITH POTABLE WATER AND
ADDRESSING WATER INSECURITY

WHEREAS, In 2019, the City of Berkeley spent close to \$20 million on providing homeless services. This budget came together from different sources: about \$6.5 million from the general fund, about \$9.5 million from regional, state, and federal funds and \$3.9 million were one-time funds from the state's Homeless Emergency Aid Program; and

WHEREAS, Amidst a variety of public health crises including a pandemic, economic recession, and a series of raging fires, the unhoused community of Berkeley battles severe water insecurity, rendering them more susceptible to adverse health outcomes such as heat stroke, lung disease and weakened immunity. This is in addition to an exacerbation of unemployment rates, which are disproportionately high among unhoused individuals. The City must close this inequitable gap in water accessibility in order to avoid overburdening other city services with issues catalyzed by contaminated water; and

WHEREAS, This year, the COVID-19 pandemic and the raging fires and smoke in the State of California are posing serious obstacles for all residents, but especially for Berkeley's unhoused communities. The economic challenges of businesses closing, financial strains and health concerns are increasing in our City, which leads to more disparities. It is necessary to support our communities who cannot buy basic necessities for survival such as potable water; and

WHEREAS, On any given night, more than 1,000 Berkeley residents do not have shelter (i.e. living outdoors in tents, on sidewalks or in vehicles) according to the [Alameda County 2019 Point-In-Time Count](#). A growing number of residents are housing insecure and at risk of becoming homeless. A majority of unhoused Berkeley residents are people of color, seniors and disabled. But the unsheltered population also includes families with children, UC Berkeley students, and residents living in tents and vehicles, which are not counted in the [2019 numbers](#); and

WHEREAS, Consider the Homeless, a Berkeley based non-profit organization, has been providing access to potable water that would be otherwise unavailable to unhoused residents. Consider the Homeless has been responding to the alarming lack of access to clean water, spending \$1,500 a month to provide 2400 water bottles. But now, the non-profit is out of funds to continue this service. The City has been receiving a supply of water from Alameda County, but can only secure 250 bottles a week. Alameda County has also announced that they will stop providing water bottles soon. Safe drinking water is an integral natural resource for human life and the health of our unhoused communities; and

WHEREAS, However, in the long run, plastic water bottles are neither a sustainable nor budget-friendly solution to the issue of water insecurity. Therefore, the city must take responsibility for this crisis and invest in long term solutions for the sake of our community and the environment. Community groups such as Berkeley Free Clinic (BFC) have devised solutions to bring an end to the crisis but require funding to move forward. We ask that the City fully fund BFC's water solution program to ensure that half measures do not exacerbate the issue and cost the city more in the long run; and

WHEREAS, The Berkeley Free Clinic (BFC) will build life-saving water infrastructure that will adequately provide long term access to clean water for people who are unhoused with proper funding. BFC's proposal requires \$900 to set up each site, \$115/week to maintain each site that will include a large tank with a foot pump for dispensing water from a spout that can be used for

drinking or handwashing. \$10,000 is necessary for the program to continue past September and to expand to four drinking water sites in Berkeley for a few more months. Fully funding the water project is essential to ensure that half-measures do not exacerbate the issue and cost the City more in the long run. Investing in basic needs will greatly diminish negative health outcomes associated with non-potable water and reduce the burden on other services the city provides. Water insecurity is an emergent problem that the city must immediately address; and

We need a reliable solution that ensures safe and sustainable access to clean drinking water for all of our community members. It is the duty of the City to ensure the safety of ALL residents, especially during these hard times.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Berkeley, California hereby approve the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$250 per Councilmember including \$500 from Councilmember Cheryl Davila, to help pay for the procurement of water bottles to be given to our unhoused residents and communities, using funds relinquished to the City's General Fund for this purpose from the discretionary Council Office Budgets of Councilmember Davila, the Mayor and any other Councilmembers who would like to contribute; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Refer to City Manager to include an allocation in the upcoming AAO budget to use existing homeless services to fund Berkeley Free Clinic's program to address water insecurity among Berkeley's unhoused communities. This program will initially require \$10,000 to construct and maintain a large tank with a foot pump for dispensing water from a spout that can be used for drinking or handwashing.

