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Cost of Homelessness in Orange County Nearly \$300 Million

Association of California Cities—Orange County (ACC-OC) played a critical role in helping collect municipal data for study

ORANGE COUNTY – A study conducted by UC Irvine, Orange County United Way, and Jamboree Housing, with the additional support of the Association of California Cities—Orange County (ACC-OC), 2-1-1 Orange County, and the Hospital Association of Orange County has found that in fiscal year 2014-2015 approximately \$299 million was spent by both government and non-government entities to address homelessness. The study revealed that the majority of this expenditure was felt by Orange County cities who bore nearly \$120 million, or one-third, of the total cost.

Homelessness remains a prevalent issue in Orange County, with the 2015 Point in Time Count report indicating that nearly 4,500 people experienced homelessness on any given night, and a reported 15,291 people expected to be homeless over the course of a year. This means that an expected 1 in 200 Orange County residents will experience homelessness at least one night during the calendar year. The 2017 Point in Time Count data, which is anticipated to be available in late June, will be used as an indicator for what progress Orange County has made in the last two years on this issue.

One key finding in the study indicated that low wages and high housing costs were the two most significant factors that triggered homelessness for Orange County residents, with nearly 76% of respondents naming one as the main cause. With the average cost of a single bedroom apartment ranging between \$1,700 to \$1,800 in 2015, the cost of housing was out of reach for many of those already experiencing homelessness, and has also created another segment of the population considered vulnerable to falling into homelessness.

“In Orange County, there are two crises when it comes to housing: one of availability and one of affordability. We know that there is not enough housing being built to sustain our growth as a County, which leads to higher costs. We also know that there are not enough affordable units available on the market to those in most need of access to them. That creates a concern of more individuals and families falling into homelessness, unless the underlying causes of affordability and availability are addressed,” said Heather Stratman ACC-OC, CEO.

“While addressing affordable housing as a preventative measure remains a priority, the Association of California Cities—Orange County remains committed to assisting cities with the homeless populations that already exist. We plan to continue working to create regional service models that focus on shifting the burden from individual cities to entire sub regions

when caring for the homeless, creating a true, county-wide, collaborative approach”, said Ms. Stratman.

The ACC-OC remains committed to helping cities end homelessness in Orange County through innovative collaborations like the UCI study, which brought together stakeholders from the academic, government, and non-profits sectors. The Association would like to thank all partners who helped make this important research possible, especially Orange County United Way who funded this comprehensive study. Those that are interested in learning more about ACC-OC’s work on homelessness or the Association’s newly organized regional service-area taskforces should contact the office or visit www.accoc.org

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The Association of California Cities – Orange County (ACC-OC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization representing the interests of the 34 cities in Orange County. ACC-OC is committed to protecting local control and revenues while offering a vast array of benefits and resources for city staff and elected representatives. Learn more at www.accoc.org.