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*Candidate California State Senate District 9*

*Solving Homelessness, A Moral Imperative*

I believe solving homelessness is a moral imperative requiring a comprehensive public policy response. The principle that everyone should have access to shelter and the opportunity for sustainable housing should be our central goal. The longer homelessness exists the negative social consequences to our communities will continue to grow at enormous cost. The ability to immediately provide emergency shelter for anyone in need should be a fundamental goal of our strategy to end homelessness. The construction, maintenance and operation of shelters for all in need is essential but has always been considered too costly. The scope and program components of this effort should be State wide, holistic with support services, food, health care, education, employment and safety-net services for individuals, children and families.

How can we conceivably afford this costly mission? Homelessness has a current cost in the tens of millions to our State now. A realistic assessment of our current cost as a society will make it easier for us to see the need to organize those unavoidable cost and make them an investment in providing real solutions to homelessness in a cost effective, humane and sustainable matter. Our current reality of jailing the homeless at a tremendous cost, the cost of emergency room services, the growing need to respond to the public health crisis, disease and the growing cost of crime is unacceptable. We have to also appreciate the long term negative impacts on the children of the homeless. It should be clear to all that there is no way to avoid our responsibility to each other or the growing cost of doing nothing. California should lead the way with a "State Commission on Homelessness" in partnership with California foundations and homeless service providers and I am sure we can solve this crisis.