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Governor signs Ramos bill creating path for mental health and homeless services at Patton State Hospital

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A bill introduced by Assemblymember James C. Ramos will create a path for mental health and homeless services at Patton State Hospital.

Unused facilities at Patton State Hospital can be leased to a nonprofit corporation or local government to provide mental health and homeless services following Gov. Newsom's approval of AB 349, which takes effect in January. Assemblymember James C. Ramos (D-San Bernardino) introduced the measure.

"I am gratified that the governor approved my bill, which provides an opportunity to create a vitally needed new regional resource to address the needs of our homeless. Addressing this need demands collaboration. No one level of government or organization can solve the issue alone,"

Ramos said.

He noted that earlier this year, the San Bernardino City Council followed Los Angeles and Long Beach in officially declaring homelessness an emergency in their city. Council members noted that the city had seen a 175 percent increase in homelessness over the past five years.

City of San Bernardino Mayor Helen Tran said, “With the signing of AB 349, the City of San Bernardino and our neighboring cities now have a solution we can pursue to assist homeless individuals in need of mental health treatment. This has been one of the biggest challenges to addressing our homeless population, and we are grateful to Assemblymember Ramos for introducing this bill and Governor Newsom for signing it.”

Specifically, AB 349 authorizes the Department of General Services director, with the consent of the Department of State Hospitals, to lease a building at Patton State Hospital to a nonprofit corporation or local government to provide housing and mental health services to homeless individuals. The details of such an agreement would be negotiated by the parties seeking to offer the services and the two state departments.

Ramos pointed out a possible model for the Patton transformation in an opinion piece last month — the award-winning Norwalk HFL Cedar Homes for Life Foundation in Los Angeles County, established on the grounds of a former state hospital.

The Assemblymember noted that reducing homelessness has been a long standing priority for him as an elected official.

“As a San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors member and chair, we began reducing the numbers homeless veterans and youth. Now, as an Assemblymember I’ve been proud to work with the county Sheriff’s Department to support its HOPE homeless program. AB 349 is a starting point to begin the necessary task of leveraging our resources to change lives,” Ramos said.

AB 349 is supported by the Family Assistance Program, California Council of Chapters Military Officers Association of America, City of San Bernardino, Clay Counseling, Garcia Center for the Arts, Highlanders Boxing Club, Inland Southern California United Way, San Bernardino County Medical Society, Time for Change Foundation and the Urban Conservation Corps of the Inland Empire. It received bipartisan support in both the Assembly and Senate and did not receive any “no” votes in the legislature.