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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Turlock Releases Mayor Bublak's Response to Governor Newsom's Letter on Homelessness

Turlock, CA | June 5, 2025 — In response to a letter dated May 9, 2025, from Governor Gavin Newsom regarding homelessness efforts in the City of Turlock, Mayor Amy Bublak has issued a formal reply addressing the Governor's concerns and outlining the City's position.

Both the Governor's letter and Mayor Bublak's response are being made available to the public and members of the media in the interest of transparency.

The City encourages the media and the public to review both documents in full, which are attached to this release.

Attachments:

- Governor Gavin Newsom's letter to Mayor Bublak (dated May 9, 2025)
- Mayor Amy Bublak's response to Governor Newsom (dated June 5, 2025)

# # #

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Contact: Amy Bublak
Turlock City Mayor
209.669.2828

Dear Governor Newsom:

Thank you for your letter dated May 9, 2025. I was disappointed that you chose to publicly attack the City of Turlock's elected officials before verifying with us whether your concerns were accurate. Your continued public criticism does not create a climate for the collaboration you claim to seek.

In addition, your position essentially creates an unfunded mandate for the City. All the consequences of State funding—its impacts on our neighborhoods, business owners, and residents—are borne by city government alone, without any outside aid.

You characterized the City Council majority's refusal to provide a letter of support and a token $1 payment as a rejection of "the County's request for partnership" to use "state funding to operate the We Care shelter."

Your grandstanding on this issue reveals that State and County funding of homelessness programs is not a partnership with city government at all. It appears you do not want any meaningful input from cities. Instead, State and County funding sources rely on token gestures—like a letter of support and a nominal $1 contribution—to ensure cities continue to go along with your systemic failure on this vital issue.

The entire system is schemed to create an iron triangle of unaccountability among State government, County government, and local NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). It is true, as your letter states, that you have delivered "unprecedented resources" to this issue, but spending does not equal solutions.

To remind you, the California State Auditor reported that the State spent $24 billion in five years on homelessness without consistently tracking whether these programs worked (California State Auditor, Report 2023-102.1, Homelessness in California: The State Must Do More to Assess the Cost-Effectiveness of Its Homelessness Programs (Apr. 2024), https://information.auditor.ca.gov/reports/2023-102.1/index.html).

The Auditor concluded that the State lacks sufficient data to determine whether key programs are cost-effective, noting serious gaps in oversight and transparency. In light of these findings, your recent criticism of our City is surprising. Moreover, none of these entities—the State, the County, or local NGOs—are accountable to cities like ours for the effectiveness of this spending.

To be clear, the specific issue that prompted your letter was never about a dollar, 24-hour bathrooms, or asking We Care to clean up downtown Turlock. It was about the City seeking a real partnership with an accountable local partner—that is, We Care—a point you have missed or ignored.

The City was asked to provide a letter of support for PLHA (Permanent Local Housing Allocation) funds that the County would award directly to We Care. As we considered this request, a key issue arose: We Care houses up to 49 men overnight (6:15 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.) but then requires them to leave at 8:00 a.m., giving them no access to facilities during the day.

At the City Council meeting, We Care staff were asked to consider providing roughly 10 hours of additional services to clean up trash and feces in the four-block area around their facility (including part of our downtown business district) or, alternatively, to help provide portable restroom facilities in the neighborhood near the shelter. The We Care Director said she did not have the authority to agree to these requests and would consult with her Board of Directors. I then recommended postponing a decision until the next meeting to allow time for We Care's Board to consider the requests. The Council agreed. We even attempted to hold a special Council meeting on Monday, April 21, to reach a compromise, but that meeting failed due to a lack of a quorum.

On April 22—ninety minutes before the next City Council meeting—the We Care Director notified us that We Care had a plan to open the bathrooms in their facility. However, just before the meeting began, she informed our City Manager that We Care would not be able to provide access to the bathrooms after all.

We Care then organized supporters to attend and protest the Council for not providing the letter of support. Ironically, We Care's own restrooms and kitchen remain locked and unavailable to their clients during the day. With no collaboration from this local NGO, the Council majority voted against issuing the letter of support.

Since then, your April 30 letter has emboldened We Care activists, who continue to press their case at City Council meetings (as is their right). However, your meddling in our local affairs has made any compromise impossible amid the ongoing posturing and grandstanding.

The entire episode proves the point: local NGOs such as We Care have no incentive to collaborate with city governments because their much more important partners—the sources of their funding—are the State and County governments. In this unequal equation, cities are left with the unfunded mandate of dealing with the negative impacts of homelessness and shelters without any funding to mitigate those consequences.

As for your implied threat of legal action regarding the City's Housing Element, I will leave that discussion for another day. The City will continue to work with State HCD staff to comply with its legal obligations under Housing Element Law.

Finally, given the high public interest in this matter, I invite you to join me in meeting with our local Turlock media so that we can answer questions transparently and together. I am happy to make myself available at a time convenient for you.

Respectfully,

Amy Bublak.

# # #

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 9, 2025

The Honorable Amy Bublak
Mayor of the City of Turlock
156 S. Broadway, Suite 230
Turlock, CA 95380

RE: City of Turlock's Inaction on Emergency Shelter

Dear Mayor Bublak and Members of the City Council:

Last month, the City Council took a vote on providing $1 to support Stanislaus County's use of state funding to operate the We Care shelter, the only low-barrier, publicly accessible emergency shelter in Turlock. The moment called for local leadership and a willingness to protect vulnerable residents. Instead, the City voted to refuse that $1 and to rebuff the County's request for partnership. The We Care shelter is now on the brink of closure due to lack of local support.

Mayor Bublak defended that decision by stating that the City needs to "start changing the way we do homelessness." I write to express my concern that the "change" the City seems to be making is to do nothing about homelessness at all.

The Council's decision to withhold funding from the We Care shelter is part of a troubling pattern of shifting priorities. The City of Turlock had previously indicated it would dedicate the bulk of its flexible state funding from the Permanent Local Housing Allocation Program to address homelessness — yet late last year, it redirected every dollar elsewhere. While the City has discretion in the use of these funds, the City's decision to pull dollars from direct assistance to persons experiencing homelessness calls into question the City's commitment to confronting the crisis and underscores a larger, unacceptable trend Californians are seeing across the state: even as the State delivers unprecedented

resources, some local governments continue to abdicate their responsibilities in the face of a humanitarian emergency on our streets.

The City cannot ignore its obligation to support its most vulnerable populations. Last week, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) sent the City a letter reminding the City that state law requires a plan for addressing the housing needs of persons experiencing homelessness. The City's draft Housing Element – which is more than a year overdue – states that the City will provide financial assistance to non-profit groups providing shelter for homeless individuals, including the We Care Shelter, as part of its plan to meet the requirements of state law. As HCD's letter indicates, if the City does not fund the We Care shelter, it will have to specify alternative actions to assist people experiencing homelessness.

I write to request that the City explain whether or not it will take action to support ongoing operation of the We Care shelter, and if not, to inform the State what alternative actions it will take to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness in its community by May 30, 2025. It is imperative that the City reconsider its priorities and demonstrate the kind of collaborative, accountable, and solution-oriented leadership this crisis demands. Enough. Do your job.

The State remains committed to supporting communities that align with these values and will continue to prioritize resources for jurisdictions taking meaningful, results-driven action.

Sincerely,

GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California