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San Diego City Council
District 1

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Statement on Supporting the Local Efforts Addressing the Humanitarian Crisis at our Border

San Diego— This weekend, my family and I volunteered at a shelter operated by the San Diego Rapid Response Network. Mark Lane and Shane Parmely also invited us to share a Christmas breakfast with families staying at their homes and in their care. These experiences reminded me of our shared humanity - this could be any of us or any of our children. Every parent wants to protect his or her children; no matter what it takes. Against insurmountable odds and unfathomable conditions, many parents have made the difficult journey to bring their children here to seek asylum and opportunities for a better, safer life.

San Diego is blessed that a coalition of human rights and service organizations, attorneys and community leaders have come together to form the San Diego Rapid Response Network to help immigrant families. To date, they have aided more than 3,200 individuals travel to reunite with family and friends all over the country. According to SDRRN, the average stay in the shelter is only 12 to 48 hours—which is very effective in getting people into more long term housing quickly. Our homeless crisis could be exacerbated without services like this in place to connect recently arrived immigrants to friends or family members in the United States.

I would like to commend the efforts of SDRRN, spearheaded by Jewish Family Service and the American Civil Liberties Union. In approximately two months, through sheer tenacity and passion, SDRRN has built an infrastructure of support for newly arrived families to have basic medical needs addressed and to be treated with dignity while waiting to travel to be with family or friends. Their efforts have been complicated by the fluctuating number of arrivals, which creates capacity and service challenges, and the search for a stable location for a shelter. The shelter has moved to five different locations in just over a two-month period.

I'm asking City of San Diego officials to review a list of properties that could be designated as short-term shelters while a longer-term solution is developed.

Also, moving forward, government officials at all levels of government, non-profits, and local leaders should work together informally or through a task force to coordinate their efforts.

It's also important to honor all the organizations and individuals involved in grassroots efforts—the hundreds of volunteers at the San Diego Rapid Response Network and the many individuals who have been opening their homes and their hearts to so many. Their collective hard work and limitless generosity illuminates how the spirit of compassion and human interconnectivity is alive and thriving, even in these trying times.

For more information on SDRRN and how to help,
<http://www.rapidresponsesd.org/>

Council President Pro Tem Barbara Bry represents San Diego City Council District 1, which includes the communities of Carmel Valley, Del Mar Heights, Del Mar Mesa, La Jolla, Pacific Highlands Ranch, Torrey Hills, Torrey Pines, and University City.

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