

San Francisco billionaire gives \$30M to study homelessness

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In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 30, 2018, Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff speaks at a luncheon in San Francisco. Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff and his wife Lynne are donating \$30 million to UCSF to research the causes and potential solutions for homelessness. The five-year initiative housed at the University of California, San Francisco will conduct academic research into homelessness and train future researchers in the field. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File)

A San Francisco billionaire is donating \$30 million to the University of California, San Francisco, to research root causes of homelessness and potential solutions.

Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff, a city native, has embraced homelessness as a philanthropic cause, pumping millions into a 2018 city measure to tax wealthy companies to pay for homeless services.

The five-year initiative funded by Benioff and his wife, Lynne, will conduct [academic research](#), provide testimony and fact sheets, and train people who have been [homeless](#) as expert speakers. The UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative will be part of the UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations, led by Dr. Margot Kushel.

The \$30 million contribution is the largest-ever private donation to fund homelessness research, according to Salesforce.

"The world needs a North Star for truth on homelessness," Benioff said in a statement. The initiative "will be that North Star, providing the latest research, data and evidence-based solutions to ensure we're investing in programs that will help solve the homelessness crisis."

Some San Francisco residents are frustrated with [technology companies](#) like Salesforce, a cloud-based software business, saying they contribute to inequality with high-paying jobs that drive up housing prices.

More than 4,000 people sleep on the streets every night in the city, where the median price of a two-bedroom home is \$1.3 million. A family of four earning \$117,400 a year is considered low income in San Francisco.

Benioff approached the university because he wants officials spending tax money to make decisions with the best data available, Kushel said.

The plan is for researchers analyze the data and provide neutral, trusted analysis.

The initiative will have the ability to help a [city](#), for example, decide whether and how to implement an alcohol management program, study the results of that program and then broadly share the information.

"We want to be a rapid response team to really help the public," Kushel said. "This is democratizing data; this is meant to get the data out there."

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