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Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
500 W. Temple St. #383
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Re: SUPPORT -- Agenda Item 24: Recovering Better Than Before: Ensuring Equitable Implementation of the American Rescue Plan

Your board has shown great leadership in prioritizing equity in your pandemic response, ensuring the county's efforts prioritize the support of L.A.'s most vulnerable – the communities of color who have been hardest-hit by COVID-19. The allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds represents another chance for you to ensure the county experiences a strong recovery by placing equity at the center. The agenda item before you would create an equity formula, based on Advancement Project California's COVID-19 Vulnerability and Recovery Index,¹ to identify the communities most impacted by the pandemic and in greatest need of recovery support, and direct additional ARPA-funded programs and services to them, ensuring an equitable distribution across and within Supervisorial Districts. It would also create much needed transparency through public reporting on the impact of these funds in our communities, and build infrastructure and expertise in the CEO's office to make it easier to create equitable allocation plans for funding streams beyond ARPA in the future. We urge you to support this groundbreaking measure by voting yes on Agenda Item 24.

Earlier this year, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide localities with much-needed resources as they take on the task of rebuilding from the pandemic, with Los Angeles County to receive a \$1.9 billion. While it appears that the County has turned the corner on the pandemic – fully reopening on June 15 – the fact remains that over 1.2 million Angelenos have contracted COVID-19 and over 24,000 have died. Beyond impacting the county's health, COVID-19 has also devastated its economy, with many Angelenos struggling to put food on the table and to keep a roof over their head.

The County's low-income communities and communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Compared to communities with low concentrations of poverty and people of color, communities with high concentrations of residents living in poverty and residents of color are more likely to have had high COVID-19 case rates, with funeral homes in East LA unable to keep up with the high number of deaths and Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital in South LA being pushed to capacity by the staggering number of low-income Angelenos of color, many of them immigrants, who had to be hospitalized.

¹ See Advancement Project California, RACE COUNTS – COVID-19: Prioritizing an Equitable Recovery For Our Highest-Need Communities, at <https://www.racecounts.org/covid/covid-statewide/#statewide-index>.

Spreading recovery resources evenly over this highly-disparate landscape would be an ineffective and inequitable response to a pandemic whose toll fell most heavily on low-income communities of color. Indeed, the federal government has provided guidance that encourages the guiding a larger share of ARPA resources towards hardest-hit communities.² To help identify the communities with the greatest risk and the greatest need for assistance, Advancement Project California developed a COVID-19 Vulnerability and Recovery Index. The Index consists of indicators grouped into three components – Risk, Severity, and Recovery Need that measure a communities’ risk of infection, risk of severe illness or death, and economic and social recovery, respectively. The indicators include:

- *Risk*: Average percentile of Black, Latinx, AIAN, and NHPI residents as a percent of population; Percent essential workers; Percent population under 200% of federal poverty level; Percent overcrowded housing units.
- *Severity*: Average percentile of Black, Latinx, AIAN and NHPI residents as a percent of population; Percent population under 200% of federal poverty level; Percent population age 75+ in poverty; Percent uninsured population; Heart attack hospitalization rate; and Diabetes hospitalization rate.
- *Recovery Need*: Average percentile of Black, Latinx, AIAN, and NHPI residents as a percent of population; Percent essential workers; Percent population under 200% of federal poverty level; Unemployment rate; and Percent uninsured population.

According to the analysis, 116 zip codes in Los Angeles County fall in the high or highest need category, with concentrations of the highest-need communities in historically Black neighborhoods, including South LA and Inglewood, as well as the Harbor region, East Los Angeles, the San Gabriel Valley, Pomona, the northeastern San Fernando Valley, and the Antelope Valley.

This motion would direct the county CEO and its Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion initiative to develop a similar equity index and formula that would be used to guide the expenditure of ARPA funds. This framework for equitable allocation would apply to the ARPA spending plan the CEO is expected to bring forward in the coming weeks – rather than dictate spending on particular programs and services, it will concentrate proportionately greater resources in higher-need communities. The mechanisms behind this concentration may vary due to geographic constraints such as city boundaries and the location of County assets such as libraries, and the differences between different programs – in some cases, the formula may be used to increase the amount of monetary aid available to residents of high-need zip codes, or focus outreach efforts so those in those communities have more opportunities to know about the services and supports available to them, or to determine where resources like internet-enabled devices should be distributed. But with more access to key supports like food aid, rent relief, small business loans, shelter and reentry beds, internet-enabled devices, and more, Angelenos in higher-need areas will get the helping hand they need.

It is important to acknowledge that not all those most impacted by the pandemic live in geographically-concentrated communities. In particular, Native American, indigenous, and Pacific Islander Angelenos suffered disproportionately from the pandemic, and must receive support, including

² U.S. Department of the Treasury, Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, Quick Reference Guide, at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRP-Quick-Reference-Guide-FINAL-508a.pdf>.

ARPA-funded programs, specifically tailored to their needs. As the motion specifically calls out, alternative metrics and approaches will be needed for these communities.

Finally, the motion will also create a dashboard for public reporting of ARPA spending and how it aligns with the equity formula, which will increase transparency, providing greater visibility to residents for how the county is stewarding this important source of federal funds. The dashboard also may serve as a model for how to communicate information about budget equity in future county initiatives.

The location of high-need communities in the county is not random or accidental. These communities of color were particularly vulnerable to the pandemic because of historical disinvestment and structural discrimination. The ARPA funds allocated to the county represent an opportunity for these communities to receive the resources they need and historically have been denied. By creating and transparently using an equity formula to guide its spending, the Board can capitalize on this opportunity and support the county's most vulnerable residents. We urge you to support this critical measure.

Sincerely,

The ACLU of Southern California - Clarissa Woo Herмосillo, Economic Justice Project Director
Advancement Project California – Jacky Guerrero, Director, Equity in Community Investments
Advancing Communities Together - Lovell Fleming, Program Director
API Forward Movement - Heng Lam Foong, Program Director
Ben Tarzynski, Community Coalition Board Member
Brotherhood Crusade - Charisse Bremond Weaver, President/CEO
California Native Vote Project - Chrissy Castro, Executive Directory
California YIMBY - Konstantin Hatcher, Statewide Director of Organizing
Carolyn Webb de Macías, Community Coalition Board Member, Partnership for Los Angeles Schools*
CD-Tech - Benjamin Torres, President and Chief Executive Officer
Children's Defense Fund California - Shimica Gaskins, Executive Director
Community Coalition – Aurea Montes-Rodriguez, Executive Vice President
Community Health Councils - Veronica Flores, Chief Executive Officer
Comunidades Indigenas En Liderazgo (CIELO) - Odilia Romero, Co-Founder/Executive Director
Dr. Manuel Pastor, USC Equity Research Institute *
East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice - Laura Cortez, Co-Executive Director
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities - Tavae Samuelu, Executive Director

InnerCity Struggle - Maria Brenes, Executive Director

Invest in Youth Coalition - Michelle Benavides, Campaign Lead

Investing in Place - Jessica Meaney, Executive Director

Khmer Girls in Action - Lian Cheun, Executive Director

LA Commons - Karen Mack, Founder and Executive Director

LA Voice - Rev. Zachary Hoover, Executive Director

Legacy LA - Lou Calanche, Executive Director

Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) - Roxana Tynan, Executive Director

Los Angeles County Federation of Labor - Ron Herrera, President, CEO

Michelle Siqueiros, Community Coalition Board Member

Pacoima Beautiful - Veronica Padilla-Campos, Executive Director

Para Los Niños - Drew Furedi, President and Chief Executive Officer

Pico California - Joseph Tomás Mckellar, Executive Director

Promesa Boyle Heights - Azucena Hernandez, Co-Director of Community Transformation

SEIU Local 2015 – Annetta Wells, Deputy Political Director

Social Justice Learning Institute - Derek Steele, Interim Executive Director

Southside Coalition of Community Health Centers - Andrea Williams, Executive Director

T.R.U.S.T South LA - Edgar Campos, Executive Director

The Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust - Kasey Ventura, Board Director

The Wilderness Society - Yvette Lopez-Ledesma, Senior Director

Trust for Public Land - Robin Mark, Program Director

Urban Peace Institute - Fernando Rejón, Executive Director

Women Organizing Resources Knowledge and Services (W.O.R.K.S.) - Elizabeth Medrano, Organizer

* Institutional affiliation listed for identification purposes only