



LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION

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ALEXANDRA VALDES
Executive Director

September 19, 2023

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
500 W Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Chair Janice Hahn,

I am sending this letter on behalf of the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC). The purpose of this letter is to respectfully request a sustainability plan to build on the great work of a Board Motion co-authored by your office, "Identifying, Supporting, and Serving American Indians and Alaska Natives Who Are at Risk of or Experiencing Homelessness" (October 2019). As you may recall, the work of the Board Motion has continued for several years and garnered many wins, thanks in part, due to the hiring of a consultant in partnership with CEO HI and the LANAIC, and made possible by Measure H funds. The consultant contract will expire this Fall, and a report back to the Board of Supervisors will be released. As you will soon read in the report back, there is still ample work and recommendations to be implemented across County departments, and we are convinced that a dedicated full-time position to lead this work is the best possible next step, and a stop-gap will likely be needed to ensure continuity beyond the expiration of the consultant contract.

In addition to requisite implementation of the recommendations outlined in the coming report back, the consultant has also helped initiate a few pathways worthy of future full-time coordination. These pathways include convening the internal AIAN County working group, leveraging their philanthropic network to seed creation of the AIAN Housing Collaborative, and liaising between tribes, AIAN-serving organizations, and County entities. A couple examples of this invaluable liaising include their added championship of a dedicated AIAN Continuum of Care Board At-Large position, and facilitation of a convening among County, tribes and tribal entities around opportunities to partner and apply jointly for Homekey funding.

While this body is not fully privy to County processes and items, we can share the attributes that we felt were and can be most helpful in continuing this work. Being positioned under CEO HI has allowed unparalleled content, policy, resource, and technical expertise, complemented by the expertise of the LANAIC in AIAN issues and our ability to engage

community. The convening power of CEO HI for the County internal working group has proven invaluable as well. Ideally this position would establish and maintain liaison with County departments, other government agencies, tribes and community based organizations. This position would participate in policy discussions, research, evaluate new and existing information, and be responsible for *implementation* of new and revised ways that County systems can support existing AIAN clients, AIAN serving agencies, and unhoused AIAN.

We acknowledge the fiscal context under which we are asking for a position. To that end, as a City/County body, we are also hoping to leverage our City relationship and prior will specifically around this issue. In September 2020 the Los Angeles City Council approved a motion to instruct the City Administrative Officer and Chief Legislative Analyst to identify funding to hire the above-mentioned consultant. While this funding unfortunately was never subsequently identified, we hope that political will still exists as another potential means to see this to fruition. Lastly, if philanthropic funds can be a bridge to identification of a permanent source of funding, we are also willing to engage in those conversations.

We are immensely grateful for the work and momentum that has transpired to date. While homelessness is the intractable issue of our lifetime, we are reminded and heartened by other urban communities in the United States and beyond who successfully house their Indigenous relatives in culturally appropriate ways. The very existence of this unique LANAIC body, other County-led AIAN specific structures, and the County report entitled “We Are Still Here,” A Report on Past, Present, and Ongoing Harms Against Local Tribes,” are all signals that we are primed for equitable action and investment. We look forward to carrying on the transformative work catalyzed by the Board Motion championed by your offices.

Sincerely,

Cheri L Thomas

Cheri L Thomas
LANAIC Chairperson

Cc: Supervisor Hilda Solis
Supervisor Holly Mitchell
Supervisor Lindsay Horvath
Supervisor Kathryn Barger