



June 10, 2020

The Honorable Members of the Budget and Finance Committee
c/o Office of the City Clerk
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring Street, Rm 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012
clerk.budgetandfinancecommittee@lacity.org

Re: The Mayor's Proposed Budget

Dear Councilmembers Krekorian, Price, Koretz, Blumenfield, and Bonin,

East Hollywood Neighborhood Council writes to express our deep concern regarding the Mayor's Proposed Budget for the Fiscal Year 2020-21 and urges you to revise the budget so that it reflects the values of our community. **At this critical time of converging health, economic, environmental and racial justice crises, our city budget should be increasing funding for the vital social services on which so many Angelenos depend, not cutting those services to offset raises for police officers.**

We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant revenue shortfalls for the City and that cuts in spending must be made. We question the priorities and values that are reflected in the Mayor's Proposed Budget, however, with regard to the cuts he has proposed—and those he has not.

Specifically, we are troubled that in a budget that cuts \$230 million in services, weakening vital programs that many Angelenos rely on and imposing furloughs on nearly 16,000 city workers, LAPD officer pay is simultaneously being increased by \$144 million. In relative terms compared to last year's spending—despite the great need created by the COVID-19 outbreak—the Mayor's Proposed Budget cuts City investments in housing programs by 9.4%, job programs by 8.9%, and homelessness programs by 6%—all while boosting its expenditure on police by 7.1%. This brings LAPD's share of the City's total unrestricted revenues to a whopping 54%.

Even before COVID-19, roughly one in three renters in Los Angeles spent more than half their income on housing, and there were over 36,000 unhoused people in our City. The pandemic will only make matters worse. Over half of Angelenos are now unemployed following the massive job losses stemming from COVID-19. And economists predict that many of the recent layoffs will be permanent. Without bold action from the City, more Angelenos will become severely rent-burdened or fall into homelessness.

We applaud the City's efforts to respond to the COVID-19 emergency: delivering meals to seniors, opening childcare centers for healthcare workers, purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) for first responders, implementing a small business loan program, committing to providing rental assistance, and setting up testing sites, additional shelters, and more. These are the kinds of interventions Angelenos need at this critical and unprecedented time. We also appreciate the gesture of the recent reduction of LAPD's budget by \$100-150 million. However, considering LAPD's total budget of over \$3 billion dollars, we should be speaking in terms of percentages, not dollar amounts. This gesture is appreciated, but it is not nearly enough.

In her opening remarks during the May 21, 2020 Council Meeting, Council President Nury Martinez said, "As we start the new fiscal year, it is important to keep in mind the people who need us the most right now—working families, those living in poverty, communities of color that have long been forgotten, seniors and children." This budget balances itself on the backs of those very people—the most vulnerable among us—largely to offset a raise for LAPD officers. If officers simply received the same pay they did last year, the City could prevent two-thirds of these devastating cuts to critical services.

Some will now undoubtedly point to the recent civil unrest in our city as justification for the budget's prioritization of law enforcement over social services. While we agree that public safety should no doubt be one of the City's highest priorities, this is a moment when we must begin to understand as a society that policing is far from our most effective tool to ensure public safety—and, in fact, for Angelenos of color—and especially black Angelenos—it can pose a mortal threat to their very lives. **This is a moment for us to recognize that investments in housing and job security, mental health care, and after-school programs are our best investments in public safety. By cutting these services, this budget will not make Angelenos safer.**

We urge you, as our representatives, to rework the 2020-21 budget so that it meets the needs of this moment. Shift resources away from policing and direct them to vital social services. Invest in true public safety. Budgets are moral documents that reflect our values. We advocate for a People's Budget that prioritizes community wellbeing and redirects funding away from the police. What kind of city cuts services and increases spending on law enforcement when its people are struggling to eat? What kind of city doubles down on policing at a moment when its deepest injustices are being exposed? What does that say about us? We need not take this path.

The coronavirus outbreak and the murder of George Floyd, together, have laid bare many hard truths—about the fragility of our healthcare system, the vulnerability of the many Angelenos living paycheck to paycheck, the real threat that police pose to Angelenos of color on a daily basis. By taking an honest look at where we are, however, we are presented with an opportunity to improve upon the past instead of repeating its mistakes. The world is watching and we have the opportunity to lead the nation in reform and shifting of funding from cops to care. It is in that spirit that East Hollywood Neighborhood Council asks you for a compassionate budget—and through it, for a more just, equitable, and humane Los Angeles.

Sincerely,

East Hollywood Neighborhood Council

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