

LA COUNTY BUDGET HEARINGS



LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S *Unmet Needs* FROM YOUR WORKERS' PERSPECTIVE



Strengthen County Park Services with Full-Time, Permanent Positions

In November 2016 the voters of Los Angeles County overwhelmingly approved a special parcel tax, Measure A, to fund projects protecting, developing, enhancing, and preserving our County parks. The proposed budget includes \$74.7 million in Measure A funds to maintain, construct, and refurbish parks and cultural facilities. However, physical upgrades may not provide the intended benefits to the community, if the County does not invest in the staff necessary to run the recreation programs and maintain the parks. The proposed 2019-20 budget fails to address chronic underfunding of the Department of Parks and Recreation which has led the Department to cut staff hours and rely on part-time, recurrent employees to perform full-time, year round functions.

Many of the County's recreation and aquatics programs are year-round. Grounds maintenance, too, is a year-

round function. Yet, because the Department is operating under severe austerity, its budget includes relatively few permanent, full-time positions. To balance its budget, the Department utilizes part-time temporary or recurrent workers in functions that could be better and more appropriately performed by full-time permanent workers.

From a labor standpoint, this means that that vast majority of jobs in Parks and Recreation do not provide compensation sufficient to support a household, do not provide adequate health benefits, or any prospect for a secure retirement. Park users are short-changed as well: a part-time, temporary workforce results in greater turnover, more tenuous ties to the community, and a weaker commitment to the County's mission.

THE 2019-20 BUDGET SHOULD ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION TO ALLOW FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND FILLING OF ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME, PERMANENT POSITIONS.



Backfill the Hole in the County Library Budget

The proposed LA County Library budget includes a \$37.8 million reduction from the prior year, and a \$51.2 million reduction from the actual 2017-18 budget.

This reflects the loss of short-term grant and user tax support. The proposed funding reductions would open up a hole in the Library budget that would inevitably result in cutbacks or elimination of successful, well-utilized programs for traditionally underserved communities, including parenting classes, STEAM, and early

literacy programs.

Moreover, in a Department that has for years operated with the thinnest of margins, funding reductions of this magnitude would necessarily exacerbate chronically short staffing for core functions and aggravate patron safety issues - conditions that already pose challenges for the LA County Library.

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Thaw the Freeze in IHSS

As the Los Angeles County's population ages, In Home Support Services (IHSS) has been struggling to meet the growing demand for services. The typical caseloads of an IHSS Social Worker is now over 400, significantly above the 249 benchmark in the MOU. And, the expansion of CalFresh has added an additional qualification process to the Social Worker's workload which exacerbates the high caseload.

Meanwhile, Provider Clerks have been removed from the offices and consolidated in a HelpLine. Unfortunately, without Provider Clerks in the offices, some of the administrative work now falls on the Social Worker. The

creation of the Helpline was intended to take pressure off Social Workers, but in some cases it has had the opposite result.

To make matters worse, vacant positions are not being filled! While Management asserts that there is no formal hiring freeze, nor do they have the authority to fill positions. Currently over 40 vacant positions have gone unfilled.

This results in more uncovered cases - seniors not getting the care they deserve. We need more Social Workers and provider clerks.

THAW THE FREEZE. FILL VACANT POSITIONS. GIVE IHSS AUTHORITY TO HIRE MORE SOCIAL WORKERS AND PROVIDER CLERKS.

Continue on the Road To Child Safety

Working together with your Board and Department leadership, SEIU 721 members are on the cutting edge of social work, driving key resources towards prevention, after care services, and the Core Practice Model. We've seen caseloads go down, less children in foster and residential care, fewer children in Probation, and shorter stays for children in out-of-home care.

But caseloads are still too high.

We must continue to strive to reach the optimum standard of 15 cases per Children's Social Worker. Span of control for Supervising Children's Social Workers should be reduced to 5:1. And staffing levels of Human Services Aids and clerical support should see proportional increases.

Unfortunately, the scheduled September 30, 2019 expiration of the Title IV-E Waiver threatens to halt the progress that we have been making. We appreciate DCFS Director Caigle's leadership on addressing this critical issue, and the work that your Board has done. SEIU 721 members are stepping up our advocacy work as well. In the next two weeks we will be sending delegations to meet with each member of our Los Angeles County congressional delegation. And we are organizing a Community Town Hall for Child Safety in June.

But, no matter how this critical issue turns out, we must find ways to sustain progress on the Road to Child Safety.

CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE TITLE IV-E WAIVER, WHILE ALLOCATING RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL STAFF NEEDED TO SUSTAIN PROGRESS ON CHILD SAFETY.



Improve Response Times in Animal Control

Despite modest progress over the past four years, the Department of Animal Care and Control continues to operate with a significant deficit of Animal Control Officers (ACOs) in the field. There are currently 98 ACOs to serve a population of 3.3 million, a ratio of one Officer for every 33,000 residents. The national standard is a ratio of 1:18,000, which would require adding 84 ACOs.

Protocols require responses to high priority calls (dangerous dogs at large, injured animals, wild animals posing a threat, law enforcement requests,

loose dogs on school grounds) within one hour. However, due to the staffing deficit, Animal Control Officers are only able to respond timely to one out of every three high priority calls.

Recently the cities of Covina and West Covina opted to end their contracts with LA County Animal Care and Control. They will instead utilize the services of private agencies. The decision to pull out of the County may have been made for economic reasons, but the current response times may have also been a factor

AUTHORIZE THE HIRING OF ADDITIONAL ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS TO REDUCE RESPONSE TIMES ON HIGH PRIORITY CALLS

Set Aside Funds to Contract-In Proposition A Jobs

In recent years, your Board has expressed a preference to perform general governmental functions using County employees, as opposed to Prop A contracts. In April 2017, your Board stated that “the County should enhance internal employment opportunities in order to minimize our reliance on external contracts.” A unanimously approved November 2018, Board motion proudly stated that County jobs “whether blue collar, white collar or otherwise, [enables employees] to attain economic self-sufficiency and stability, to become contributing members of their local communities and to plan for their own and their families’ economic

future. In an era where private (and some public) employers are applying increasing economic pressure on their employees, the County stands out as a responsible employer that supports its employees’ ability to attain a solid middle-class lifestyle through their own labor and their long-term commitment to the County.”\

To great credit, your Board has recognized that Prop A savings are usually achieved at the expense of good jobs, and have inherent social costs. Nevertheless, continuing to contract in Prop A jobs will require additional resources, which should be identified in the budget.

CREATE A BUDGET ITEM WITH FUNDS SET ASIDE TO ALLOW FOR THE CONTINUED CONTRACTING IN OF PROP A JOBS.

Cut Expenses and Backlogs in HIM while Reducing Reliance on Registry

The Department of Health Services has made progress in recent years in reducing reliance on the use of expensive personnel registries in Health Information Management (HIM). Today only one Temporary Health Information Management Personnel Services (THIMPS) contract remains, which is scheduled to expire on June 30, 2019. Unfortunately, the Department is not yet in a position to terminate this contract, and it must be extended for another year. There are still backlogs in inpatient HIM. As a result the County is not maximizing

reimbursements. Until additional positions are created and filled, DHS has no choice but to continue to pay for higher-priced contract coders.

Labor and Management have met to discuss solutions to this problem, such as : During the 2019-20 fiscal year, while the THIMPS contract is extended, outpatient HIM staff could be trained to fill desperately needed inpatient positions. However, DHS must be given the authority to create and fill such positions.

THE 2029-20 BUDGET SHOULD INCLUDE ADDITIONAL INPATIENT HIM POSITIONS. AS THEY ARE FILLED, IT WILL ALLOW DHS TO CONTINUE TO REDUCE ITS RELIANCE ON EXPENSIVE REGISTRIES.

End Chronic Shortages in Interventional Radiology by Fixing Standby Coverage

IR Technologist staff cover off-shift cases from Cardiac Cath Lab, Interventional Radiology, Neuroradiology, Intravascular Neurosurgery, Vascular Surgery, and Cardiac Electrophysiology. While these coverage areas have separate teams, they share radiology staff. Consequently, in order to provide critical coverage for these teams, radiology staff are frequently called in. Because of the relative shortage of positions, these standby assignments and call-ins fall heavily on existing staff. The frequency of call-ins along with the critical nature of these cases leads to a restrictive lifestyle for IR Technologist staff, the majority of whom have to juggle work and family responsibilities. Meanwhile, the stand-by

compensation for LA County IR Technologists is among the lowest in the United States and less than one-third of what their RN teammates earn when standing by. The restrictive lifestyle along with the minimal rate of compensation has created a demoralized work environment.

These problems are reflected in consistent staff shortages. Open items remain vacant for years. Transfer candidates view Interventional Radiology as a demotion. Outside candidates simply don't show up. New hires continue to look for outside opportunities. And vested staff seek to transfer to other departments.

TO FIX THE PROBLEM OF CHRONIC SHORTAGES IN INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY, ADDITIONAL POSITIONS MUST BE CREATED AND COMPENSATION FOR STANDBY COVERAGE NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED.



Everybody Counts: Invest in Workplace-Based Enumeration

An undercount in the 2020 Census would result in reduced resources for the residents of Los Angeles County. It has been estimated that for every person who is not counted the state of California would lose \$20,000 over the next decade. A million-person undercount would result in a loss of \$20 billion!

SEIU 721 is committed to working with the County of Los Angeles to maximize the count. In the course of their work, SEIU 721 members regularly interact with hard-

to-count populations, including the indigent, uninsured, persons with mental disabilities, etc. Enumeration stations should be set up in Public Social Services office lobbies, health center waiting rooms, etc. And a cadre of County workers (VIP?) should be trained to guide residents through the enumeration process while they are visiting County worksites.

DURING THE CENSUS 2020 ENUMERATION PERIOD - BEGINNING APRIL 1 - ASSIGN COUNTY WORKERS (PERHAPS VETERAN INTERN PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS) TO STAFF CENSUS KIOSKS IN SOCIAL SERVICE OFFICES, HEALTH CENTERS, AND OTHER COUNTY FACILITIES.



STAND UNITED

