

January 24, 2023

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

Establishing an Independent External Governance Reform Committee to Review and Improve Los Angeles County Board Governance Structure to Strengthen Equity

The County of Los Angeles (County) governance structure has evolved significantly over the past decade. In 2015, the Board of Supervisors (Board) [amended](#) the County’s governance structure in order to: 1) Restore the Board’s direct authority over all non-elected department heads, thereby increasing interactions and discussions with department executives on important policy questions; 2) Approve the Chief Executive Office’s (CEO’s) establishment of Ad Hoc Initiatives to address Board priorities, and Agenda and Policy Committees to “recommend to the Board policies and practices that result in more effective and innovative services to constituents”; 3) Reaffirm the Board’s role in setting policies and providing strategic leadership for the County government; and 4) Reaffirm the CEO’s role in overseeing day-to-day County operations, offering analysis and recommendations on issues before the Board, and monitoring the implementation of Board decisions. Following this effort, the Board has continued to take steps to improve its governance model, such as through the August 2022 [motion](#) to assess the needs and improve the effectiveness of LA County commissions.

Despite this progress, there are still opportunities to improve the County’s governance model, particularly with the Board, to enable a more equitable, transparent, and effective policy development process. For example, while the County has informal policy committees (otherwise known as clusters), other county governments like Alameda County and San Francisco County, and city governments like Los Angeles City, use a policy committee structure to transparently deliberate policies amongst elected officials and formally vote on them before they advance to the full Board or Council.

In other jurisdictions, this process also includes a public budget and appropriations

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committee, through which comprehensive priorities and key considerations are transparently discussed before decisions are made at the full Board meeting. Additionally, there are other opportunities to improve the County Board's decision-making processes, including ensuring that Departments are communicating with *all* Board offices about key policy decisions and clarifying the role and responsibilities of the Chair of the Board. Given the immense power of the Board and the County's massive [\\$44.6 billion budget](#), reforms to the policymaking and budget development process could have a positive and meaningful impact on lives of the County's 10 million constituents.

As we endeavor to deliver government services more equitably, the Board has an opportunity to proactively review its own governance model and identify potential reforms that align with the Board's priority around serving the most marginalized while delivering community accountability. An exploration of potential governance reforms should be conducted by an external entity to ensure impartial assessment and recommendations.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Authorize the Executive Officer (EO) of the Board to negotiate and execute an agreement, within 60 days, with an independent third-party entity to convene stakeholders, seek input from the community, and to return to the Board of Supervisors (Board) with recommendations on updating the Los Angeles County (County) Board governance structure to increase transparency on policy and budget development, improve representation, and advance a more ethical County. The third-party entity shall represent academia and/or a professional policy group that have expertise at the intersection of government and equity, and should engage internal and external stakeholders, including experts on various local democratic reform issues, as well as members of the community. The third-party entity will report back to the Board in writing 60 days after being retained on a proposed stakeholder engagement structure and a workplan outline with associated meeting agendas and timelines.
2. Direct the EO to support the third-party entity and report back to the Board in writing in

six months after being retained on an initial set of recommendations, including but not limited to:

- a. Creating a new independent Office of the Chief Analyst (similar to the state Legislative Analyst Office) to provide separate review of key items before they are voted on at Board meetings;
 - b. Establishing a set of publicly transparent policy committees, including a Budget and Appropriations committee, to deliberate all motions in advance of the full Board meetings;
 - c. Conducting an independent review and analysis of the annual budget for the Chief Executive Office (CEO) with recommendations for operational efficiencies;
 - d. Exploring the implementation of any priority recommendations from the County Citizens Redistricting Commission's report.
3. Direct the CEO, through its Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, to report back to the Board in writing within 60 days on legislative opportunities that would:
- a. Make further amendments to the Brown Act, including allowing members of the public to comment remotely at public meetings beyond a designated state of emergency; and
 - b. Allow boards and commissions appointed by the Board to convene virtually where a quorum of the body is present in person and allow for remote public comment.
4. Direct the County Counsel to prepare an ordinance change to Chapter 2.190 of the County Code and to delete any provision that limits campaign contributions so that County contribution limits are consistent with state levels for both individual contributions as well as officeholder committees pursuant to Government Code Section 85301(d) and return to the Board for approval within 30 days.

5. Direct the County Counsel, in consultation with the EO of the Board, to codify in an ordinance, language to prohibit the Chair of the Board from taking any action that would commit County resources or County departments to specific action without a public vote of the full Board, and return to the Board for approval of the new Board policy within 30 days.

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