

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND HILDA SOLIS**

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**FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR FOSTER CHILDREN**

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is the nation’s largest public child welfare agency, serving approximately 35,000 children, including those placed out of their home and those that remain in the home of their parent/s.

While the County remains focused on ensuring child safety and protecting them against abuse and neglect, we have a greater responsibility to support the welfare and well-being of these families while they are part of the system. This is an immense charge when you consider the large number of children, birth parents, foster families, relative caregivers, and others who touch the system. As such, a wider net of resources is necessary.

Faith-based groups have long been an important force in supporting the needs of their local community, providing compassion and dedication while also offering tangible resources. In fulfilling their mission to support those in need, faith-based institutions have historically provided volunteers, donations, shelter, support programs, and other services for the most vulnerable.

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Over the years, DCFS has worked with the faith-based community to recruit and retain foster homes. For example, the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships (CSPPP) collaborated with DCFS last year to host the first *Fostering Home* event in South Los Angeles to recruit and support resource families to care for foster children in the South Los Angeles community. That event resulted in a collaboration of churches coming together, with support from the private-sector, as the South Los Angeles Foster-Care Ministry. A second *Fostering Home* event is planned for the City of Pomona on September 29, 2018. Faith-based collaboration is expected to increase to provide support for families at risk of entering the system. This is a positive expansion as we know that many of those involved in the faith-based community want to support the child welfare system, but cannot commit to becoming full-time foster parents. We also know that we need more resources beyond foster families and homes. The children and families in our system need parent mentors, youth mentors, tutors, visitation monitors, parent visitation centers, access to food, and concrete support for new foster families, families who have recently reunified, and those who are struggling or emancipated youth now on their own.

The County, and the many children and families who we serve, would benefit greatly from an established collaboration between DCFS, the Center for Strategic Partnerships, philanthropic funders, other partners, such as the Commission for Children and Families, and the faith-based community. This would enable the County to develop long-term strategies among key partners to implement viable pilot programs in specific communities suitable for expansion opportunities, and to identify and assess the needs and services that would have the greatest benefit for children and families. In support of these efforts, the Child Welfare Collective Impact Group of the Child Welfare Funders Collaborative and others in philanthropy have begun assessing the landscape and considering opportunities to expand efforts in this direction.

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Robust and targeted coordination with faith-based communities will provide the County with meaningful and sustainable solutions to recruit resource families and expand additional supports for vulnerable children and families.

**I, THEREFORE MOVE** that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors direct the Center for Strategic Partnerships (Center) and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), to develop a coordinated faith-based engagement strategy and program as outlined below:

- Engage with philanthropy to explore creating capacity, and the potential to bring on a consultant to achieve the following goals:
  - ✓ Collaborate with key County departments, partner organizations and stakeholders to develop a strategic and coordinated framework to successfully engage the faith-based community; and
  - ✓ Identify promising pilot programs based on the regional needs identified in each supervisorial district that may include programs such as resource family recruitment, visitation centers and monitoring, respite care, cultural brokers, concrete supports, assessments, substance abuse counseling, and other support services.
- Develop appropriate measurements and data collection methods to demonstrate the impact of faith-based engagement and guide promising practices for future initiatives.

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- Explore whether a centralized unit within DCFS should be established to manage, coordinate, and oversee implementation of faith-based outreach, ensuring participation and involvement with relevant County departments and partner organizations. And if so, make recommendations as to size and scope and explore options for funding, with recommendations included during the 2019-2020 budget cycle.

Report back to the Board in six months on the status and implementation of aforementioned directives.

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