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Support of SB 464 (Hurtado) and AB 221 (Santiago, Chiu and Rivas)

Los Angeles County is facing a hunger crisis. More than 20% of low-income County households have been identified as experiencing food insecurity, an issue further exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and mounting economic hardships. Food insecurity is caused both by economic hardship and structural discrimination, and, according to research by the University of Southern California, many of those most affected by food insecurity are people of color, which includes our undocumented communities. Under federal and state mandates, many of our undocumented residents are not eligible for the County’s social safety net programs such as CalFresh, which offers supplemental nutrition assistance. Additionally, many of our undocumented residents are also essential workers who have continued to risk their lives during the pandemic. During this time, the County has leveraged its emergency funds to address the current food crisis by holding over 100 free food distribution events, provided food vouchers to our most vulnerable low-income residents and issued

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grants to community based organizations that have continued to provide food assistance during the pandemic – all of which serve residents regardless of immigration status. Therefore, it is imperative that the County support legislation designed to address food needs within our undocumented communities.

SB 464, also known as the Food for All bill, would allow low-income undocumented immigrants to receive food-assistance benefits under the California Food Assistance Program regardless of their immigration status. To qualify, immigrants must meet all other CalFresh eligibility criteria. The bill would eliminate distinctions based on when the noncitizen applicant entered the country and would also eliminate sponsorship and other listed state criteria requirements for eligibility by a noncitizen who entered the country on or after August 22, 1996. If passed, the expansion would impose a state-mandated local program administered by each county but would not come into effect until January 1, 2023.

AB 221 is an urgency bill that would provide emergency food assistance to millions of low-income Californians during the COVID-19 crisis. This bill would also require the State Department of Social Services to conduct a study and provide recommendations on how to establish a permanent food assistance program available to all food-insecure Californians regardless of legal status. AB 221 would also seek to address current overwhelming rates of food insecurity and help prevent more Californians from falling into poverty or homelessness.

Los Angeles County must continue to support its communities through the many challenges imposed by the COVID-19 crisis and ensure that basic human necessities are met for all its residents.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct Los Angeles County's legislative advocates in Sacramento to support SB 464 (Hurtado), which would allow low-income undocumented immigrants to receive food-assistance benefits under the California Food Assistance Program regardless of their immigration status, as well as AB 221(Santiago, Chiu and Rivas), which would provide emergency food assistance to millions of low-income Californians during the COVID-19 crisis regardless of immigration status.

S:DZ/Support for SB 464 (Hurtado) and AB 221 (Santiago Chiu and Rivas)