

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS
AND SHEILA KUEHL

April 20, 2021

Countywide Cultural Policy Implementation

Arts and culture play a critical role in the economic and resiliency of LA County, not just in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in the long-term vitality of our communities. By declaring April 2021 as Arts Month, we recognize that cultural inclusion is critical to the overall health and well-being of our families.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has devastated the arts sector in LA County. Over 350 applicants to the LA County Arts Relief Fund, the majority of which were small nonprofits serving vulnerable communities, reported over \$230M in losses and additional expenses due to the pandemic. Fifty-one percent of all eligible organizations had laid off at least one employee, and nearly all applicants saw revenues reduced by 25 percent or more.

We also know that many organizations in the sector – especially those in the performing arts – will be among the last to come back to full operations. But these closures have had an even greater impact beyond the loss of wages and revenue for artists and organizations. Residents of LA County have lost access to important places and programs where they learn something new, express their culture, explore ideas, gain new skills, find solace, and connect with their community. Before the pandemic, 13.5 million

MOTION

MITCHELL _____

KUEHL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

SOLIS _____

people visited or participated in nearly 200,000 performances, exhibits, workshops, and other events at arts nonprofits each year, and 40,000 people volunteered with them. As recovery ensues, demand for arts and culture continues to run high. A survey of arts audiences in LA County finds 89 percent of people are eager to return to live, in-person performances. Supporting this sector's survival will help preserve our creative economy, the cultural identity and vitality of the region, and the well-being of our residents and communities where they live.

Data collected about the arts and culture workforce in LA County show there is much more work to be done. The work that arts institutions, funded by LA County, have already done toward achieving greater diversity constitutes a strong base to build upon, but there is growing recognition that it is necessary to move beyond simple measures of diversity and address deeper issues of cultural equity, inclusion, and access to the arts. As a County, we have an unprecedented opportunity to maximize assets and diversify resources to make gains in cultural equity and expand access to the arts for all residents.

In addition to being a national leader in arts and culture, LA County is the largest county in the United States and one of the most diverse. People of color have constituted the majority of LA County since the late 1980s. According to the US Census Bureau, 48 percent of residents are Latinx or Hispanic, 14 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 8 percent are African American, 1 percent are Native American, Alaska Native or other, and 2 percent are of two or more Races. Our communities speak more than 220 languages and reflect a richness of cultures, identities, and characteristics.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis that became an economic crisis and a crisis of social isolation. LA County's Department of Public Health has helped us see

clearly racial inequities in health, showing which communities have been hit hardest by the crisis of the pandemic. The LA Economic Development Corporation has shown us inequities in terms of which communities have been hit hardest by the economic crisis.

Long-standing inequities in the arts and culture sector led Supervisor Hilda L. Solis to author a motion passed in 2015 directing the LA County Arts Commission (now the LA County Department of Arts and Culture (Arts and Culture)) to identify constructive ways to “enhance the participation and leadership of individuals from underrepresented communities in the arts,” focused on leadership, staffing, programming and audience composition. This comprehensive analysis resulted in the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII).

In June 2017, the Board unanimously adopted the thirteen recommendations set forth by CEII, and, through a motion by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis and Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, voted to fund four of the thirteen recommendations included in the CEII report, which the Department of Arts and Culture subsequently launched. One of those funded recommendations was to establish a Countywide Cultural Policy (Cultural Policy) to provide a roadmap with concrete elements focused on equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, for how all LA County Departments can contribute to cultural life to ensure every resident has access to arts and culture.

Los Angeles County has invested meaningfully in arts and culture for more than a century, including through its County-owned cultural venues and support of arts nonprofit organizations through several grant programs. However, more work is necessary to solidify gains made, advance cultural equity, and increase access to the arts and its many benefits for all residents. To make progress toward this goal, historic and existing

inequities that have created barriers to participation in arts and culture must be addressed. For example, small and midsized nonprofit organizations in the arts and those located in and dedicated to serving the most vulnerable underserved communities, such as low-income communities of color, rural communities, and others, are chronically undercapitalized and underfunded. Most grantee organizations of LA County's Organizational Grants Program fall into these categories.

Utilizing the arts to inform and enhance service delivery to LA County constituents, often among the most vulnerable populations in the region, is also critical. Further, incorporating the arts in Countywide plans, initiatives, and projects and leveraging County departments, assets, and infrastructure, will allow Los Angeles County to advance cultural equity across sectors of civic life from education and child welfare to justice reform and community development to greater cultural inclusion and belonging, in support of Board and County goals.

On June 23, 2020, the Board unanimously adopted the Countywide Cultural Policy and directed Arts and Culture to develop a plan for implementation. On October 23, 2020, Arts and Culture filed their report back with the Board (ATTACHMENT A).

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Instruct the Department of Arts and Culture to implement recommendations outlined in the report, to the extent feasible with existing resources and develop a strategic plan to enact the goals of the Cultural Policy and report back on progress in one year.
2. Direct the Department of Arts and Culture to report back annually on the progress

of County departments and agencies in incorporating the arts in Countywide plans, initiatives, and projects for the purposes of greater cultural inclusion and belonging, as outlined in the Cultural Policy and include in this report back an update on all other Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative funded recommendations.

3. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back during the FY 2021-22 Final Changes budget on:

- a. funding \$250,000 for an Arts and Culture needs assessment as outlined in the report back; and the feasibility to fund one Senior Program Associate, Arts and Culture position to manage the implementation and ongoing work of the Cultural Policy.

#

HLS:ko