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Expanding the Life Sciences Industry While Creating Equitable, High-Road Career Opportunities for our Local Communities

Investment in the life sciences, medical technology and bio-innovation holds great promise as we build an inclusive, equitable, and resilient Los Angeles County (County). In 2021, the County’s life sciences industry directly employed nearly 100,000 individuals and saw a 65% jump in National Institutes of Health research funding year over year.¹ The County is home to 20% of all direct life sciences jobs in California and helps to generate \$60.8 billion dollars in economic activity.² Careers in the life sciences industry are relatively high-paying, with an average income of \$98,000, nearly three times the Countywide average income per capita of \$34,000, according to Census Bureau data. There is much for the County to gain by continuing to invest in life sciences, however, any investment the County makes in life sciences must be explicitly tied to tangible community benefits.

In 2020, Biocom surveyed 369 life sciences companies on their Diversity Equity

¹ <https://labusinessjournal.com/weekly/las-life-sciences-sector-sees-growth-nih-funding-n/>

² Biocom California 2021 Economic Impact Report for LA County: <https://www.biocom.org/news/eir/>

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and Inclusion (DEI) practices and strategic planning.³ 34% of respondents require a diverse group of candidates for all open positions; while only 25% indicated they require a diverse group of candidates for senior positions. Alarming, only 18% require diversity on their hiring committees. Furthermore, according to Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO)'s 2022 Diversity Report, a survey of 99 BIO member companies, the majority located in California, revealed that "Black and Latinx professionals are underrepresented at every level of the industry, from entry level to C-Suite, compared to their representation in society."⁴ According to the survey, people of color make up 38% of all employees, however, they only make up 24% of executive teams, and 28% of CEOs.

If the County is to build back with equity, we must create quality, family-sustaining wage jobs for our historically marginalized, and ensure investment in our communities benefits its residents. The life science industry can fulfill the promise of opportunity if new jobs are grown locally and with partnership with the County, equitably. Critically, the County, in partnership with the life sciences industry, must invest both in places and people by: (1) improving related STEAM education and career exploration in K-12 education in our hardly-reached communities, (2) increasing availability of robust paid training opportunities for interested youth in the industry, (3) improving and promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in employer hiring and recruitment practices, (4) creating an anti-displacement policies and enforcement mechanisms that prevent sciencewashing and gentrification.

Over the last decade, County officials and industry leaders have taken proactive steps to develop the region's life sciences industry, including creating incentives for siting and developing these types of land uses across the County. The Board of Supervisors (Board) has engaged in a number of significant actions to support the expansion of the life science ecosystem and the build out of the equitable talent pipeline. This has included the development of a Countywide life science development non-profit, Bioscience Los Angeles (Bioscience LA) and the dedication of workforce development resources to a life sciences pre-apprenticeship program. Additionally, the Board has designated the life

³ DEI in California's Life Science Industry: <https://www.biocom.org/news/eir/>

⁴ https://www.bio.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/261734_BIO_22_DEI_Report_P4.pdf

sciences industry as a high-priority, high-road industry for inclusive workforce development strategies – ensuring that our local residents are the first to benefit from investments in this growing industry.

Moreover, the County has invested significant resources in building out the diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce pipeline for the industry. The County, in partnership with the South Bay Workforce Investment Board, developed the BioFlex program which exposes high school students to careers in the life sciences. Additionally, with support from the County, Bioscience LA offers BioFutures, a program for college students from under-represented cross-sections of the population, that allows participants to gain career exposure and paid work experience in an industry that they may not otherwise have had access to. Currently, programs like BioFutures and BioFlex provide important but disparate opportunities for the life sciences workforce pipeline in the County. It is essential that the Department of Economic Opportunity work closely with community colleges, universities, and programs, service providers and employer partners to strengthen and streamline career pathways for our hardly reached youth who are underrepresented in the life sciences industry.

On August 7, 2018, the Board instructed the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, County Counsel, Fire Chief, and the Directors of the Department of Public Works and the Department of Health Services to report back on the feasibility of developing land use or permitting tools that would streamline the entitlement and permitting process for bioscience-related uses in unincorporated areas of the County. As DRP develops area plans, there are opportunities to incentivize life sciences uses that create quality jobs for communities who have not typically had such access.

Creation of life science facilities has also been a strategic part of the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center (H-UCLA MC) Campus, where The Lundquist Institute (TLI), one of the foremost non-profit research institutions in the United States, has conducted cutting-edge medical technology research since 1952. TLI has been a key partner to the County and critical component of the H-UCLA MC, where physicians can conduct research and return to the bedside where their patients can immediately and directly benefit from such

research efforts. On November 10, 2020, in acknowledgement of the important role TLI plays on the H-UCLA MC Campus, the Board approved an [Option Agreement](#) with TLI that contemplated the construction of a life sciences tech park. However, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing construction of a new hospital on the campus, the tech park efforts lost momentum. Accordingly, it is appropriate to revisit the shared vision for a tech park and in good faith determine a path forward that puts community needs at the center.

It is paramount that the County leverage its considerable investment in the life sciences industry to incentivize quality jobs for our hard-to-hire populations. This includes creating business opportunities for home-grown firms to innovate in the County, stay in the County, and hire locally. This can be accomplished through supporting the start-up ecosystem, building out the talent pipeline, and leveraging our County land use authority to site and expand our quality employers that generate family-sustaining wage jobs. It is essential that this work is completed with input and collaboration from essential stakeholders, including life sciences firms, trade associations like Biocom, community-based organizations, and County residents.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the Director of the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to work with Bioscience LA, the South Bay Workforce Investment Board, trade associations, and employer partners, to leverage the career exposure ecosystem of the BioFutures and BioFlex program, and report back in writing in 90 days with a *Life Sciences Cradle to Career* employment pipeline from local communities consisting of populations under-represented in the life sciences industry.
2. Direct the Director of DEO to develop a suite of financial incentives, at no additional cost, that provides support and technical assistance for small life sciences firms who are navigating the business start-up and expansion process. Incentives must be tied to employer participation in local hire and workforce development programs and include recourse mechanisms if firms do not meet agreed upon outcomes. These supports should include

- recommendations for, but not limited to:
- a. Tax incentives that employers can access for start-up costs, and for hiring those with barriers to employment;
 - b. Business development services;
 - c. Customized and on-the-job training for the current and future workforce; and
3. Direct the Director of DEO, with support from the Director of the Department of Regional Planning (DRP), to develop a recommended structure for a tenant improvement fund to build out new life sciences spaces and to upgrade existing spaces for firms that agree to hire locally, and report back to the Board in writing in 90 days with the structure for a fund conditioned on robust community benefits. Fund guidelines should include anti-displacement measures for both local residents and businesses, and provisions to recover funding if agreed upon outcomes are not met and should be coupled with robust community outreach and input.
 4. Direct the Director of DRP, in coordination with their counterparts at relevant departments including the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Fire Department, the Department of Public Health, and DEO, to designate a life sciences ombudsperson to triage and streamline jobs that create life sciences development and report back to the Board in writing in 120 days with an implementation plan.
 5. Direct the Director of DRP to explore innovative approaches to zoning in industrial areas that would serve to create jobs and incentivize the siting of life sciences firms modeled after the San Diego Employment Mixed Use Zones, and that would incorporate measures ensuring local communities benefit first from any life sciences uses, and report back to the Board in writing in 120 days with recommendations. Recommendations should include:
 - a. Lessons learned from projects, such as Transit Oriented District specific plans including considerations for housing affordability and anti-displacement measures, and

- b. Proposed mechanisms for ensuring community benefits.
6. Direct the Chief Executive Officer, in close coordination with the Directors of the Department of Health Services and DPW, to resume good faith collaboration and negotiation with the Lundquist Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center Campus to advance development of a biotechnology park that would incubate new life sciences firms, in a manner that would not disrupt delivery of critically needed campus health and mental health services to the local community, and report back to the Board in writing within 90 days with an update on these efforts.

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