

REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND
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APRIL 4, 2017

Los Angeles County Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative

The benefits of the arts are many, and everyone deserves to have equal access to them. In a County as ethnically and culturally diverse as well as geographically sprawling as Los Angeles, it is our responsibility to ensure that all the benefits of, and opportunities provided by, the arts are available and accessible to all residents, no matter who they are or where they live. From arts education for young people to arts programming for senior citizens, the arts have been proven to make individual lives better and strengthen communities. They improve health and well-being, and they improve cognitive skills. Even more, the arts can bring people together across demographic, economic and social lines. They are places where people can both see and express themselves, their communities and their cultures in public performances and exhibitions. The arts also offer important career and leadership opportunities. While Los Angeles County has invested in arts and culture for more than a century, there is more work to be done so that all residents have equal and meaningful access to the arts and the benefits they provide.

In November 2015, the Board of Supervisors directed the Los Angeles County Arts Commission to conduct “a constructive County-wide conversation about ways to improve diversity in cultural organizations” for all LA County residents. The Board

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specifically directed the Arts Commission to focus on four key target areas: Boards of Directors, Staffing, Audience/Participants, and Programming. To this the Arts Commission added a fifth: Artists/Creators. This resulted in the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII).

Data collected about the arts and culture workforce as part of the CEII process show there is much work to be done. The work that arts institutions, funded by the County, have already done toward greater diversity, constitutes a strong base to build upon, but there is a growing recognition that it is necessary to move beyond simple measures of *diversity* to address deeper issues of cultural *equity*, *inclusion* and *access* in the arts. As a County, we have a historic opportunity to maximize LA County assets, including the institutions we fund, and to effect change in the wider arts ecology throughout LA County, to improve the engagement for all our residents in every community.

In addition to being a national leader in arts and culture, LA County is one of the largest and most diverse counties in the United States. The population of LA County has been a majority of “people of color” since the late 1980s. According to the US Census Bureau, 48 percent of residents are Latino 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 Two or More Races. The remaining 27 percent are White.

For most people, “diversity” first brings to mind concepts of race and ethnicity. However, the term includes other important areas of diversity such as socio-economic status and gender, and people experience them as intersectional rather than separated and hierarchical. In LA County, for example,

- 19 percent of LA County residents live at or below the poverty line
- 14 percent are unemployed or under-employed
- 56 percent speak a language other than English at home

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- 6 percent report they are living with a disability
- 51 percent are women

Today, the arts ecology of LA County includes major LA County cultural institutions, nonprofit arts organizations of all disciplines and sizes, social service, health and environmental organizations that utilize the arts to support their missions, and private businesses. In passing the CEII resolution, the Board of Supervisors committed itself to not only being at the forefront of a national conversation about how arts and cultural organizations can and should reflect and embrace diversity in all the ways it is experienced and understood, in all communities across LA County, but to go beyond conversation to actionable strategies.

Now it is time for the Board of Supervisors to lead in the implementation of the recommendations in the final report of the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative, recommendations that were unanimously adopted by both the Advisory Committee and Arts Commissioners. We commend the Advisory Committee members, Arts Commissioners and staff who have led a robust public process over the past 18 months to arrive at these 13 recommendations. We recognize that all 13 recommendations work together to create a more equitable cultural future for LA County. While all may not be able to be implemented at one time, the recommendations create an important road map that should be travelled over the course of several years, and it is imperative that this journey begin now with recommendations that both build on existing successful programs, as well as those that chart a new course.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Pending the allocation of funding, Direct Los Angeles County Arts Commission to:

- a. Working with the Chief Executive Office, draft a cultural policy for LA County with concrete elements focused on equity, diversity, inclusion and access that would solidify the gains made through the CEII process and recommendations, and will serve as a framework for how all LA County departments, as well as commissions and major initiatives, can contribute to cultural life. This cultural policy would position LA County as a national arts leader in advancing cultural equity and inclusion in every sector of our civic lives. The draft policy shall be brought back to the Board of Supervisors within one year.
- b. Initiate a requirement that all cultural organizations receiving LA County funds have written, board-adopted statements, policies or plans that outline their commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and access, and monitor progress. The Arts Commission will be responsible for integrating this requirement into its Organizational Grant Program guidelines beginning with 2018 applications.
- c. Develop an LA County initiative in coordination with the Entertainment and Information Technology sector strategy being implemented under the Regional Workforce Development Plan 2017-2020 creating access to work-based learning and leadership opportunities for all junior high and high school students, particularly students of color, low-income students, LGBTQ students, disabled students, current and former foster youth, and youth on probation, as well as others who experience barriers to participation, to prepare youth for careers in the arts and creative industries.
- d. Scale up the existing LA County Arts Internship Program with additional internship opportunities set aside for community college students, emphasizing inclusivity of those from communities of color, low-income

neighborhoods, the disabled community, and other communities that experience barriers to arts access.

- e. Given the extent of the activities to be undertaken it is important for the Advisory Committee of the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative to continue to meet for the next five years in order to establish clear methods of evaluations and provide an annual report on progress of the above programs. (The Arts Commission has already begun this task when it committed to conducting the workforce survey that was piloted as part of CEII for an additional four years, which will allow measurement of change over time in the arts workforce.) Other measures related to arts education, artists/creators, neighborhoods, audiences and programming shall also be developed, funded and measured as appropriate. The Arts Commission shall establish guidelines to maintain a CEII Advisory Committee as a standing committee of the Arts Commission, determine how frequently it should meet and how its members will continue to be selected, and report back to the Board of Supervisors on an annual basis on the progress of CEII implementation and evaluation.

- f. For the June 2017 budget deliberations, direct the Chief Executive Officer to provide a written report to the Board with recommendations on funding these initiatives.

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