

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

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Assessing the Economic and Regional Effects of the Coronavirus on Businesses

The coronavirus has spread more than just misinformation and false health rumors. It has spread xenophobia and racist sentiments. As the coronavirus spreads worldwide, and as many other countries announce travel restrictions to and from China, so has the paranoia spread about the coronavirus. There has been too much misinformation spreading around cultivating fears in the community and furthering the racial profiling of our residents and affecting businessowners – especially our Asian Pacific Islander (API) entrepreneurs. We must stray away from racially charged panic over the virus and connecting certain businesses and groups of people to the outbreak. Effectively fighting contagions will also require fighting fears driven by discriminatory and xenophobic impulses directed against API communities, which comprise 15 percent of the overall population in Los Angeles County (County).

Based on current information, the Department of Public Health has provided assurances that the spread of the virus in the County remains low and there is no immediate threat to the general public. There have been reports of petitions to close

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schools and cancel events in areas such as in the San Gabriel Valley, despite a lack of evidence of the virus in these communities. Of the 1.8 million residents there, almost 30% are of API descent. False health information including warnings to avoid Asian food and Asian-populated areas has circulated, only fueling xenophobia and discrimination in the community to unnecessary levels, especially through social media platforms. Residents must not be excluded based on their race, country of origin, or recent travel if they do not have symptoms of the illness.

It is the role of the County to keep residents informed with accurate and up-to-date information. Grouping xenophobia along with the anxiety and fear residents may be experiencing only legitimizes these discriminatory responses to the coronavirus. It is incumbent upon the County to condemn any and all discrimination and identify ways of supporting impacted communities.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) Economic Development Division, in partnership with the Acting Director of the Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services Department, the Director of the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs and their Office of Immigrant Affairs, and relevant partners, to report back to the Board in 45 days on the following:

1. Assess the impact of coronavirus-related incidents on small businesses and economic activity in API communities of the County;
2. Identify available programs and resources to support businesses that are being adversely impacted by the Coronavirus;

3. Develop an outreach and education plan for the public to learn and have access to accurate information and resources about the Coronavirus.

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