

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS
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Youth@Work 2020-2021: Reinvesting in Our Youth

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted every sector of the economy and Los Angeles County’s workforce. As businesses closed, jobs were lost and, for youth, the impact of school closures and distance learning have created additional obstacles. Recently, the California Employment Development Department reported that from mid-March to April 25, 2020, youth between ages 16 to 24 made up an astounding 53.3% of all unemployment claims in California. Furthermore, state unemployment rates for youth ages 16 to 19 and 20 to 24 are 16.7% and 9.1% respectively as of April of this year.

Young people are experiencing the negative economic effects caused by the pandemic more acutely, according to a recent study by the Urban Institute. 57.4% of respondents aged 18 to 22 said their families have lost jobs, work hours or income, compared to 35.4% of those aged 54 to 64. The study also found that youth entering the workforce during a recession may see their earning power reduced for as long as

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two decades.

Los Angeles County (the County) can and must engage youth in work opportunities that encourage their learning and leverage their knowledge and energy to engage in work experiences responsive to the County's needs. To that end, the County's Youth@Work program serves an average 10,000 youth ages 14 to 24 each year. Youth@Work is a vital onramp to the "World of Work" by connecting the most vulnerable youth to meaningful work experience, preparing youth to be work-ready with crucial soft skills, and by providing access to entry-level career pathways that may lead to permanent employment. The County Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS), which manages the Youth@Work program, partners with the other six Local Workforce Development Boards to ensure equitable access to Youth@Work services countywide. Youth@Work also aims to reduce the youth disconnection rate by prioritizing services to those who dropped out of school, are struggling to remain in school, and to those who may have graduated but are not employed or enrolled in any school. According to the County-commissioned report, *A Portrait of Los Angeles County*, Black and Latino youth have the highest rates of disconnected young people. These priority populations also include but are not limited to youth who are disconnected, foster, LGBTQI, experiencing homelessness, system involved, and low income.

WDACS has ensured continuous program operation for Youth@Work services during COVID-19 by directing the workforce system to provide the soft skills component of the program through a virtual space. WDACS is also in the process of securing a virtual online platform for those who may not be able to participate at a physical worksite. In addition, given the current public health risk, WDACS is exploring opportunities to

maximize the virtual platform and create a bridge for youth to experience a mixture of age-appropriate project-based learning, traditional program components, and even the possibility of accessing online credentials through partnerships with adult schools and community colleges.

Engagement of youth can also directly benefit the County's response to COVID-19. WDACS is working with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to train contract tracers, with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to provide supports for humanitarian efforts related to food insecurity and homelessness, and with small businesses to help them with their COVID-19 compliant re-openings. Through these efforts, youth can experience the value their generation has helping during this historic crisis.

While this Board of Supervisors supports these efforts, additional actions are needed to ensure funding and work experience remain during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beyond. In addition, efforts are needed to examine ways in which the existing program can continue by pursuing other funding sources to provide subsidized employment to youth. The intention of the Youth@Work program is to provide youth with meaningful work experience. The program remains central to the County's central role of service to youth and it must remain—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office, working with the Acting Director of WDACS, to:

1. Identify up to \$20.7 million in the FY 2020-21 Supplemental Budget, including the consideration of any Youth@Work funding that was unspent in FY 2019-20 due to

the disruption of COVID 19, to continue the current level of existing Youth@Work program funds for FY 2020-21 without disruption, in particular for those who are experiencing homelessness, are justice involved, youth of color, foster, LGBTQI, low income, and otherwise disconnected youth.

2. Report back in the FY 2020-21 Supplemental Budget with a funding plan to sustain the Youth@Work program to the extent possible.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Acting Director of WDACS, the Director of Department of Public Social Services, the LA County Workforce Development Board, and the Director of the Department of Human Resources to:

1. Identify work learning opportunities within County Departments for participating youth to assist in COVID-19 related projects while adhering to physical distancing and other public health guidelines.
2. Work with training resources available in County Departments, America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs), and community-based organizations who provide youth employment or prepare participating youth in these assignments. Given that many County departments are not yet available to provide in person training opportunities, consider how our AJCCs can help to connect youth with appropriate in-person training opportunities.
3. Report back in 30 days with a plan to implement this County Youth COVID-19 response effort.

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