

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

July 21, 2020

Maintain Arts Internship Program Funding

The Los Angeles County Arts Internship Program (AIP) supports and strengthens the economic and cultural sectors of Los Angeles County (County) by providing access to high quality opportunities for college students of all backgrounds to gain experience, understanding, and transferable skills relevant to careers in the arts, the creative economy, and engagement in public life. Established in 2000 as a companion to the Getty Foundation’s Marrow Undergraduate Internship Program, which funds 10 week, full-time internships in visual arts organizations and museums for college students, the AIP allows students to develop a deeper understanding of the work involved in nonprofit arts administration, better understand the role of the arts in communities and develop skills that can be put to use in their future careers. The AIP provides grants to nonprofit performing, presenting, film, media, literary, and municipal arts organizations to hire students to engage in specific projects over the summer. It also facilitates educational and networking opportunities for the interns to get a broader view of the arts ecosystem outside of the context of the day-to-day work within their organizations.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors’ (Board) investment in AIP began

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with a commitment to fund approximately 120 positions, on par with the Getty Foundation's program. The AIP quickly became a mainstay with a ripple effect across the County, with many interns remaining in the field and going on to supervise other interns. While the program's structure has remained relatively unchanged over the years, its focus has shifted to reflect the changing needs of both organizations and students in the County. Most notably, the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII) highlighted the need to support diverse students of all backgrounds to be able to take advantage of internship opportunities.

As a result, the Board, in 2017, expanded the number of positions funded through the program in recognition of the unique role that workforce development opportunities like the AIP play in addressing continued disparities of equity and access to careers in the arts. The Board stipulated that the additional positions be reserved for community college students, emphasizing inclusivity of those from historically marginalized communities that experience barriers to the arts. The expansion to include community college students has allowed the County to contribute to a future arts and culture workforce that is racially, economically, and culturally representative of the County's great diversity. To that end, the number of participating community college students has risen from 7 in 2017 to 48 in 2019, an increase of over 500%.

The AIP is the County's primary arts and culture workforce development program, employing more than 2,200 undergraduate interns in arts organizations across the County to date. Now in its 20th year, the program has shifted from a summer program to a more flexible remote work-based learning opportunity due to the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally budgeted for 228 internships, the most in its history, with the expanded positions reserved for community college students, the AIP was cut to 178 internships for FY 2020-21.

Data show that youth between age 16-24 and those identifying as Black and Latinx are particularly struggling with COVID-related unemployment. 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. Moreover, the unemployment rate for youth ages 16 to 19 and 20 to 24 reached 18.6% and 10.5% respectively by May of this year, a continued increase from the prior month.

As reported in the AIP 2019 Final Report, only 38 percent of AIP interns identified as White in 2019 while the Department of Arts and Culture's 2019 Workforce Demographics Study Results reported that 59 percent of the arts and culture workforce in LA County identifies as non-Hispanic White. This means that AIP is a critical entry point for young people of color into careers in arts and culture.

The AIP was recently presented by the Arts and Culture Sector Work Group of the County's Economic Resiliency Task Force to the Board, as a proposed recommendation to the County's workforce and economic recovery efforts. By getting artists and arts organizations back to work, we can continue to support the cultural lives and community resilience of Los Angeles County, and help our residents thrive. Efforts to strengthen the safety net must be systemic, for all workers, including arts and culture workers. Maintaining funding to the AIP at this moment in time will help recognize the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the County that has magnified underlying structural and systemic inequities; address and dismantle historical inequities in services, investments, and opportunities; and ensure that arts and culture are at the table in the County's plans related to resilience and recovery.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer, working with the Department of Arts and

Culture, to report back in the FY 2020-21 Supplemental Budget Phase on available funding to maintain the Arts Internship Program for FY 2020-21.

2. Direct the Department of Arts and Culture to report back to the Board in 180 days with a status report on how COVID-19 is impacting the organizations and students participating in the current Arts Internship Program cycle, and an update on the design plan for the next cycle of the program which will respond to the state of the arts and culture field in light of COVID-19.

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