

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN AND
SHEILA KUEHL

February 9, 2021

Creating Long-Term, Cross-Sector Coordination for a Sustainable and Just Food System

Food insecurity has been an ongoing and growing problem within Los Angeles County (County) for some time. Since regular assessments began in 2002, no fewer than 20% of low-income County households have been found to experience food insecurity in any given year. During the COVID-19 pandemic the issues surrounding food insecurity have become more urgent than ever, affecting almost 40% of low-income households and more than 1 in 4 households altogether across the County, according to research conducted by the University of Southern California.

In response to surging rates of food insecurity as a result of the pandemic, the County established a Food Security Branch (FSB) within its Emergency Operations Center to support the expansion and adaptation of existing food programs, led by the Chief Sustainability Office (CSO). The CSO was an ideal location for the FSB to be housed during the pandemic because the regional sustainability plan included a goal (Goal 10: A sustainable and just food system that enhances access to affordable, local, and healthy food) that focuses on leveraging County assets for a sustainable and just

MOTION

MITCHELL _____

KUEHL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

SOLIS _____

food system. The FSB regularly convened a Food Security Taskforce comprised of public, private, nonprofit, and philanthropic partners in order to coordinate food programs, identify and fill program gaps, and increase impact and leverage local capacity. When funding became available, the FSB worked directly with these partners and key County departments – including the Departments of Public and Social Services (DPSS), Workforce Development Aging and Community Services (WDACS), Public Health (DPH), and Health Services (DHS) – to support underserved populations through existing, as well as new, food programs. Although it is difficult to estimate the FSB’s total impact on food security rates, these coordinated efforts helped feed hundreds of thousands of County residents by distributing millions of pounds of food, millions of home-delivered meals, and direct financial support. Other County programs that provided financial relief, including the rental assistance program and resources for dislocated workers, likely also supported food security by preserving limited household income for food.

On June 23, 2020, the Board of Supervisors (Board) passed a motion directing the CSO, in collaboration with a philanthropic co-lead and other stakeholders, to report back on best practices, current efforts, and a plan for ensuring cross-sector coordination to address the County’s issue of food insecurity. The CSO partnered with the California Community Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation to form a working group that reviewed best practices, assessed the County landscape pertaining to food insecurity, and gathered extensive stakeholder input to develop recommendations on how best to address this issue. As a result, the report back found that the infrastructure that feeds County residents is a mixture of public, private, and nonprofit services, goods, and facilities. Additionally, there is a high degree of interdependence across the different sectors of this food system, which means that any efforts aimed at making the food system more resilient, equitable, or sustainable will necessitate extensive collaboration.

There is also an urgent need to develop and share comprehensive data, coordinate across the county and among cities and nonprofit organizations, and fund a collective effort aimed at addressing food-related inequities.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt and implement the recommendations and strategies outlined in the Report Back on Establishing Plans for Long-Term, Cross-Sector Coordination in Support of a Sustainable and Just Food System (Item No. 29 Agenda of June 23, 2020) dated January 20, 2021;
2. Direct the Chief Sustainability Office to consult with a cross-sector and intergovernmental mix of stakeholders – as described in the report noted above - and submit semi-annual updates to the Board of Supervisors with policy recommendations, grant opportunities, data on food needs and resources (including an examination of variation and inequities across the County), and other relevant issues, including an initial program evaluation report two years from now that considers program effectiveness and makes recommendations on the ongoing need for these efforts and whether and how they may be continued;
3. Instruct the Chief Executive Office and Chief Sustainability Office to explore the potential willingness of philanthropy to provide funding to support the initial two-year incubation period, and longer if this effort is recommended to continue.

#

JH:mk