

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

February 7, 2023

Action for American Heart Month 2023

February is American Heart Month, and each year the month is dedicated to raising awareness of the risks of heart disease, remembering those who have passed away, and promoting lifesaving measures to reduce the risk of heart disease. Heart disease, which is the catchall phrase for a variety of conditions that affect the heart's structure and function, is the leading cause of death in the United States, claiming the lives of over 650,000 people each year. Black, Latino, American Indian, and Alaska Natives carry a disproportionate toll from heart disease, often driven by social risks and social determinants of health such as poverty, barriers to accessing health care, and poor access to health affirming resources. According to the California Health Interview Survey, approximately 27% of adults in Los Angeles County has/had high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. In the County, the prevalence of hypertension is 41% among Black/African American residents, 26% among White residents, 25% among Latino residents, and 25% among Asian/Pacific Islander residents, with mortality rates nearly mirroring these trends. According to reports from the Centers for Disease

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Control and Prevention (CDC), although 80% of adults are aware of having hypertension, only about 50% have this condition under control. Heart disease remains one of the top leading causes of death in the nation and in Los Angeles County.

Hypertension develops when blood flows through arteries at higher-than-normal pressures and is the single most preventable and modifiable risk factor for premature development of cardiovascular diseases, such as coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, atrial fibrillation, stroke, aortic aneurysm, and chronic kidney disease. Although control of hypertension is possible, per the CDC, progress has been slow in the past 10 years and more could be done.

Fortunately, increasing access to health-affirming resources can help keep hearts healthy. Increasing access to safe places for physical activities and healthy foods, along with not smoking and finding healthy ways to reduce stress can help prevent heart disease. In addition, medications that can effectively lower blood pressure are readily available to all and generally inexpensive. With more public education regarding healthy blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and blood sugar levels, and with better management of blood pressure through appropriate health care, the risk of heart disease can be considerably decreased.

Efforts to educate and control heart disease are even more important given the pandemic. Studies have shown that even a mild case of COVID-19 can increase a person's risk of cardiovascular problems. Researchers have found that rates of heart failure were substantially higher in people who had recovered from COVID-19. This motion complements the Board's unanimous action on January 24, 2023, to train County employees on cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external

defibrillators (AEDs) as well as ensure appropriate placement of AEDs in County facilities,¹ to help address the increase in the prevalence of heart disease. This was an important first step in preparing the County to address this serious condition, but additional community-wide action is needed to ensure residents are informed of methods to prevent and control heart disease, as well as resources and support available to them.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Proclaim the month of February 2023 as Los Angeles County Heart Month, affirming Los Angeles County's commitment to fighting cardiovascular disease.
2. Instruct the Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the Department of Health Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Aging and Disabilities, the Department of Public Social Services, and other relevant departments, to:
 - a. Engage with health plans to promote evidence-based interventions to prevent heart disease, such as home blood pressure monitoring, reducing copays for antihypertensive medications, and removing pre-authorization for treatments that improve overall cardiovascular health;
 - b. Provide resources, messaging, and best practices to *promotoras* and community health workers to help prevent and/or manage complications from heart disease;
 - c. Engage with community-based organizations, academia, labor, and

¹<https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/176986.pdf#search=%22Cardiopulmonary%20Resuscitation%20and%20Automated%20External%20Defibrillators%22>

employers to promote strategies spearheaded by the American Heart Association to support cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health;

- d. Implement a public messaging campaign utilizing social and ethnic media and distributing materials to promote heart health to key community partners to increase awareness of best practices for heart-health care;
- e. Connect these efforts with the Department of Public Health's efforts pursuant to the motion "Healthy Food Access for Diabetes and Prediabetes Prevention," passed by the Board of Supervisors on November 15, 2022; and
- f. Report back in 90 days with the results of the above directives.

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