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February 28, 2023

**Improving Los Angeles County Board Governance to Strengthen Equity and
Transparency**

The County of Los Angeles (County) governance model has evolved significantly over the past decade. In 2015, the Board of Supervisors (Board) [amended](#) the County’s governance structure in order to: 1) Restore the Board’s direct authority over all non-elected department heads, thereby increasing interactions and discussions with department executives on important policy questions; 2) Approve the Chief Executive Office’s (CEO’s) establishment of Ad Hoc Initiatives to address Board priorities, and Agenda and Policy Committees to “recommend to the Board policies and practices that result in more effective and innovative services to constituents”; 3) Reaffirm the Board’s role in setting policies and providing strategic leadership for the County government; and 4) Reaffirm the CEO’s role in overseeing day-to-day County operations, offering analysis and recommendations on issues before the Board, and monitoring the implementation of Board decisions. Following this effort, the Board has continued to take steps to improve its governance model, such as through the August 2022 [motion](#) to assess the needs and improve the effectiveness of County commissions.

Despite this progress, there are still opportunities to further review the County’s governance model and identify potential improvements. As part of the Board’s deep commitment to advancing an inclusive, equitable County, it can analyze its own processes and structure to ensure that they align with good democratic governance best practices nationwide – thus ultimately enabling more equitable policy outcomes. As

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ChangeLab Solutions, a nonprofit that works on good governance issues, [states](#): "An equitable, inclusive community engagement approach to public decisions ensures that the people most affected and most marginalized, especially those who have been historically left out of these conversations (e.g., low-income people, returning citizens, communities of color, recent immigrants, speakers of English as a second language), have a say in the decisions that affect their lives." Consistent, transparent decision-making processes with meaningful opportunities for public participation results in "decisions that are more responsive to community priorities, avoid many unforeseen consequences, and create relationships that hold local governments accountable."

Local governments are increasingly experimenting with innovative strategies to advance more equitable and inclusive policy and budget development processes, such as through launching participatory budgeting processes and enabling virtual public participation in meetings. Additionally, while the County has informal policy committees (also known as clusters), other County governments like Alameda County and the City and County of San Francisco, and city governments like Los Angeles City, use a policy committee structure to deliberate and vet policies amongst elected officials before they advance to the full Board or Council. In other jurisdictions, this process also includes a public budget and appropriations committee, through which comprehensive priorities and key considerations are discussed before final decisions are made. Further, some counties such as San Diego County require that County Counsel, the Chief Administrative Office, and the Board Chair review and approve the filing of all Board motions.

Local and state governments are also exploring reforms to increase public participation and constituents' power in the electoral process, ranging from adjusting campaign contribution limits to establishing public funding programs. While the design of public funding programs vary (e.g., matching funds, vouchers, grants), there are at least 27 active public funding programs in states, counties, and cities across the country, such as Montgomery County, Los Angeles City, and Massachusetts. If designed well, these programs could serve to incentivize greater constituent outreach.

While the Board has a distinct jurisdictional context, it can learn from models in other localities and explore any applicable reforms that could enable a more inclusive political system, particularly a more transparent, equitable process for policy and budget

development. A review of the Board's governance model and an exploration of best practices and potential reforms should be conducted with input from an external entity to ensure more impartial assessment and recommendations. Given the immense power of the Board and the County's massive \$44.6 billion annual budget, potential improvements to the policymaking process could have a meaningful, positive impact on the lives of the County's 10 million constituents.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the Executive Officer (EO) of the Board of Supervisors (Board) to conduct an expedited Request for Statement of Interest (RFSI) competitive solicitation and report to the Board in writing within 90 days with a recommended independent third-party entity (Consultant) to work with the EO to convene stakeholders and conduct a review of the Board's governance model and identify best practices from across the country. In the RFSI, the EO should seek a consultant with a background in academia and/or policy with expertise at the intersection of government and equity. The scope of work for the solicitation should include a written analysis of best practices and recommendations on potential governance reforms to enable a more transparent and equitable policy development process, including but not limited to:
 - a. Exploring a process for advance review of proposed motions and Board letters in order to increase analysis and the opportunity for public review before they are considered by the Board;
 - b. Reviewing the current policy cluster system and budgeting processes, including suggestions for improvements that will increase efficiency, transparency, and equitable outcomes;
 - c. Developing a procedure for routine evaluations of the County Code, County Charter, and the Board roles and authorities, procedures, and parliamentary processes, enabling a continuous improvement process that ensures that the County's governing documents and procedures are modernized and align with the ongoing evolution of governance best practices;
 - d. Reviewing potential changes to the structure of the Board, including expansion of the Board to achieve more equitable representation.

2. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in coordination with the EO, to report back during the 2023-24 Final Changes budget on an appropriate funding source to cover the cost of the Consultant, including an exploration of potential philanthropic funding.
3. Direct the CEO, through its Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, to report back to the Board in writing within 60 days on legislative opportunities that would further amend the Brown Act to:
 - a. Explicitly allow members of the public to comment remotely at public meetings beyond a designated state of emergency; and
 - b. Allow commissions and committees created by the Board to conduct hybrid meetings by convening virtually when a quorum of the body is present in person. Also explicitly allow for remote public comment at these commission and committee meetings.
4. Direct the Interim County Counsel, in consultation with the CEO's Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative, to report back in writing in 90 days with recommendations for County campaign finance reforms to advance a more equitable process, including an analysis of adjusting contribution limits, creating a matching funds program for County elections, and establishing fully publicly financed elections, and creating a process for routine review of campaign finance ethics (e.g., a campaign finance ethics commission following every County election).

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