

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

July 25, 2023

Proclaiming August 2023 as Black Business Month

The month of August was first designated as Black Business Month in 2004 by two Black entrepreneurs, Frederick E. Jordan and John William Templeton, with the purpose of highlighting the challenges Black business owners experience and strive to overcome. Black-owned businesses in America can be traced back to the late 1700s when free and enslaved Black people ran barbershops, tobacco shops, shoemaking services and other businesses. The African Insurance Company in Philadelphia was one of the first recorded Black-owned businesses in America, trailing back to 1810.¹ Founded in 1881 and started as a stop on the Underground Railroad, E.E. Ward Moving & Storage Company LLC of Columbus, Ohio is the oldest running Black-owned business, surviving 142 years and counting.² Black-owned businesses in Los Angeles have a rich history and continue to empower Black people as a means of wealth-building, employment, and service to communities.

¹ [The African Insurance Company \(1810-1813\) • \(blackpast.org\)](#)

² [About E.E. Ward Movers | Moving Services in Columbus, Ohio \(eeward.com\); This is America's oldest running black-owned business | CNN Business](#)

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As of 2015, of the 631,000 plus minority owned businesses in Los Angeles County (County), almost 82,000 are Black-owned. In 2020, Black-owned businesses supplied jobs for 1.3 million people in America. Across the country, Black-owned businesses have contributed billions of dollars to the U.S. economy.³ However, Black-owned businesses continue to face distinct challenges – including a lack of access to capital and limited connections to the networks needed to grow their businesses. Due to these barriers, Black-owned businesses are twice as likely to be classified as “at risk” or distressed” compared with white-owned businesses because of their financial health and only four percent of Black-owned businesses advance past the start-up stage.⁴

In recent years, the County Board of Supervisors has taken critical steps to tackle these challenges and support Black-owned businesses and businesses owned by women and other people of color. The County has targeted American Rescue Plan Act resources to support diverse small businesses with capital investments, trainings, and technical assistance – ranging from free legal support and small business counseling to over \$54 million in grants that have been distributed to 6,800 small businesses. The Department of Economic Opportunity is also launching an Economic Mobility Initiative, which will provide funding and other supports for women and entrepreneurs of color to start and scale their businesses.

The County can continue to advance the presence and growth of Black-owned businesses by supporting and uplifting Black Business Month activities. Black Business Month helps increase the visibility of Black-owned businesses and emphasizes the importance of patronizing Black-owned businesses. Black Business Month activities also enable Black-owned businesses to connect with additional resources, investment opportunities, and networks. To support these activities, the County can collaborate with other organizations throughout the County that support Black-owned businesses, such as the Black Business Association and the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce.

³ [The SBA Celebrates and Empowers Black-Owned Businesses this Black History Month | U.S. Small Business Administration](#)

⁴ [Can Small Firms Weather the Economic Effects of COVID-19 | Federal Reserve Bank of New York](#)

It is essential that the County uplifts Black Business Month activities and continues to support Black-owned businesses year-round to encourage job growth, strengthen the economic viability of Black communities and communities of color, and close gaps in equity and opportunity.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Proclaim the month of August 2023 as “Black Business Month in the County of Los Angeles (County).”
2. Instruct the Director of the Department of Economic Opportunity to support Black Business Month activities including but not limited to:
 - a. Coordinating County small business resources at the Black Business Association's First Annual Black Business Day event, including small business legal support, small business counseling, and access to the subsidized wages programs;
 - b. Organizing business certification workshops for small businesses to become certified vendors in the County’s contracting preference program as Local Small Business Enterprises, Community Business Enterprises, Social Enterprises, and/or Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises;
 - c. Organizing a “Doing Business With Los Angeles County” workshop, in coordination with the Internal Services Department, to increase awareness of the County’s procurement opportunities and the process of procuring with the County;
 - d. Promoting Black Business Month activities through the Department of Economic Opportunity’s website and social media platforms;
 - e. Serving as the County liaison between other County departments and community-based organizations to promote and collaborate on Black Business Month activities.

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