

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN**

AGN. NO.  
April 7, 2026

**Ensuring the Junior Lifeguard Program is Accessible for All Angelenos**

For more than 90 years, the Los Angeles County (County) Fire Department has welcomed children ages 9 through 17 to participate in their Junior Lifeguard program each summer. The Junior Lifeguard program takes place on the County’s beaches and instructs youth in beach and ocean skills, including swimming, body surfing, first aid, rescue techniques, and CPR. Youth from across the County participate in this program each year, learning vital water safety skills and getting a firsthand look at the important work that our LA County lifeguards do. Some of these youth go on to join the Fire Department as lifeguards, and over 50 percent of the County’s beach lifeguards were trained in this program as youth, making the Junior Lifeguard program a valuable workforce development opportunity for County residents.

Since June 1978, the Fire Department has been required to ensure that the Junior Lifeguard program is self-sustaining. To accommodate for increased operational costs, and comply with the requirement that the program is self-sustaining, the Department has gradually increased the program fee over the past few years: at the beginning of 2022, the program fee was \$535, and just four years later, the Department is proposing a \$705 fee per participant for the six-week 2026 summer program. Last summer, the program fee was \$635. Increasing the fee for this program places the burden on County residents

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– including families from mid- and low-income areas of the County. While the Department offers scholarships for some program participants, those scholarships are income-based. Therefore, there are families who do not qualify for scholarships, but also cannot afford the full program cost, who end up in a position where they must try to find outside scholarship dollars on their own in order to participate. Ultimately, young people from these low-to-middle-income families are disincentivized from participating in the program. Inevitably, some families do not even consider program participation because of the high cost and lack of knowledge that scholarship opportunities may be available. Additionally, the scholarships that the Fire Department provides for its low-income program participants are partially funded by \$1 million from the Chief Executive Office – which expires after next fiscal year. Beyond that, the Department will have to identify additional funding to cover the cost of these scholarships, and part of that plan would be to increase the program fee even more, making it even less accessible for a wide range of families.

The Junior Lifeguard program is a public service program with a mission to “educate youth in our community in ocean and beach safety, physical conditioning, basic first-aid, and environmental awareness, while developing the next generation of future lifeguards and leaders.” In other words, it is a County program aimed at serving youth of the County and exposing young people from all backgrounds with a priceless educational and leadership development opportunity. Rather than increasing the cost for families and placing the burden on them to sustain the program, the Fire Department should identify other funding sources to sustain the program.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors authorize the Los Angeles County Fire Department to use funding sources outside of Junior Lifeguard program fees to sustain the Junior Lifeguard program, removing the decades-long requirement that the

program be self-sustainable.

**I, FURTHER, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Los Angeles County Fire Department to identify other Fire District or Net County Cost funding sources to cover operational cost increases for the 2026 Junior Lifeguard program, and for at least the next three years of the Junior Lifeguard program, rather than increasing the program fee for participants.

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