



**PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
HOLLY J. MITCHELL
LINDSEY P. HORVATH
JANICE HAHN
KATHRYN BARGER

Correspondence Received

The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:				
Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
CS-8.		Oppose	anonymous anonymous	<p>I am raising serious concerns about the current operations and leadership within the department. The Office of Small Business (OSB) is not being managed effectively, resulting in severe staffing shortages, unmanageable workloads, and the collapse of core program functions.</p> <p>Hiring Practices and Lack of Transparency Management positions continue to be filled without postings, and selections consistently involve personal friends and family members brought in from New York. This creates an appearance of favoritism, undermines trust, and violates the expectation of fair and competitive hiring within the County.</p> <p>Critical Understaffing and Program Instability OSB is severely short-staffed. Essential programs, including Sidewalk Vending, Cart, and Certification, are being operated with only one or two employees. Staff are being denied time off because there is no coverage, and employees are being forced to juggle multiple programs—some handling up to five at a time. This is unsustainable and directly impacts service delivery to small businesses across Los Angeles County.</p> <p>Misalignment of Classifications and Out-of-Class Work Numerous staff are assigned duties far outside their job classifications, including contract review and amendments, creating operational and compliance risks. OSB urgently requires a full departmental reclassification and proper staffing structure.</p> <p>Lack of Accountability and Departmental Direction There is no clear structure, workflow, or managerial support. Policies are being created or enforced without alignment to County standards. Critical programs, such as Countywide Certification, are being run with a single staff member despite heavy demand—especially with increased expectations tied to the upcoming Olympic Games.</p> <p>The department cannot continue to operate this way. The current leadership approach is not meeting operational needs, not supporting staff, and not ensuring the continuity of essential County services. Immediate intervention and corrective action are necessary to restore structure, accountability, and proper staffing.</p>



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Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
CS-8.		Oppose	anonymous anonymous	<p>The Office of Small Business is so severely understaffed that employees are unable to take proper breaks or lunches, whether in the office or while supporting events. Everything is handled last-minute due to the constant lack of personnel. Under Kelly Lo Bianco's leadership, staff are being overworked because there simply are not enough employees to meet operational demands. In addition, there is clear inequity in scheduling: the HQ office is allowed a 9/80 schedule and only required to report in once per week, while OSB staff must report to the office three days per week and are denied access to the same 9/80 schedule. With current shortages, OSB staff will soon be required to report five days per week, further worsening workload and morale. Despite repeated concerns, DEO continues to ignore these issues, and programs are now failing to meet deliverables outlined in their MOUs.</p> <p>Management recently issued a same-day bulletin informing OSB staff that they could no longer take time off, without any formal comm</p>
			EX EMPLOYEE	<p>To the Honorable Members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors:</p> <p>I am a former employee of the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS), which preceded the creation of the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), and later served under DEO. During my years at WDACS, many of the issues that have become commonplace under the leadership of Director Kelly LoBianco simply were not prevalent. The culture that has developed under her leadership is one of fear, exhaustion, uncertainty, and passive-aggressive management. I agree with all the comments on this item made by others.</p> <p>Perhaps the most damaging aspect of this culture is the use of performance evaluations as a tool of control rather than employee development. It became widely understood through unwritten practice that positive ratings such as "Very Good" or "Outstanding" were effectively unattainable regardless of performance. Employees, including managers and MAPP-level staff, learned that negative or diminished evaluations could be used to undermine, control, or discourage individuals rather than recognize their contributions.</p> <p>Employees are expected to remain online and available virtually at all hours, while leadership routinely sends communications throughout the day and evening, contributing to a culture in which employees feel they are never truly off work. Staff are pushed beyond reasonable expectations and are frequently assigned duties well outside their classifications without advocacy or support from leadership. Many staff work unpaid OT just to stay afloat.</p> <p>One of the most frustrating aspects of working under Director LoBianco was the inability to obtain clarity. Employees who sought guidance directly were often redirected back through the chain of command. Yet those same</p>



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supervisors frequently lacked answers themselves and feared asking upward for clarification because doing so risked being ostracized or viewed negatively. As a result, employees were left to execute poorly defined expectations while bearing the consequences when those expectations inevitably changed. Even our DEO HR Director went on extended leave, then transferred back to CEO. Same thing with our Chief Deputy, extended leave for months. Same pattern repeats with many others in the department.

The department's emphasis on optics has become increasingly apparent. Leadership frequently appears focused on photo opportunities, public appearances, and showcasing programs while failing to acknowledge the employees who sacrifice nights, weekends, and their mental health to make those programs possible. Board staff and external stakeholders receive attention and availability, while employees experiencing burnout and raising concerns often feel ignored.

Despite frequent discussions about equity, many staff members have observed that difficult questions regarding internal equity, workload distribution, and employee treatment are routinely deflected. Leadership continues to commit the department to additional initiatives and expectations without adequately considering current staffing levels or operational realities. Vacation requests have often become subjects of negotiation rather than support.

Employees have repeatedly raised labor concerns and workplace issues, yet many feel those concerns have not been adequately addressed. We once participated in a training on psychological safety, and many employees left with the sobering realization that our workplace lacked the very principles the training sought to promote.

The result has been extraordinary turnover. Employees have transferred, demoted themselves, resigned, quietly disengaged, or taken extended leaves. Entire teams have experienced instability. Many talented individuals who genuinely cared about the department concluded that remaining in the environment was no longer sustainable.

Director LoBianco has repeatedly sought additional resources and funding to "right size" the department, yet resources alone cannot fix a culture problem. Organizational health requires leadership that listens, advocates for employees, provides clear direction, and builds trust. Those qualities have been absent for far too many employees.

I am deeply concerned that DEO's leadership structure rewards agreement upward while transmitting unrealistic expectations and stress downward. Employees bear the consequences while leadership avoids accountability. The Board should carefully consider whether the current leadership culture is sustainable and whether it is serving either employees or the residents of Los Angeles County.



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				<p>I respectfully request that the Board conduct a thorough and independent review of employee morale, turnover, labor relations, management practices, and organizational culture within DEO. The future of the department depends not only on funding and programs, but on leadership that inspires confidence, trust, and psychological safety.</p> <p>For many employees, including myself, this has been the most difficult leadership environment we have experienced in County service. DEO employees deserve better. The 5 little Queens must take action !!!</p>
			Phuc Yuu Kellz	Test Test 123 Test Test
		Other	DEO Former Employee	<p>As a former employee of the DEO, I am submitting this public comment to document the serious and sustained harm I experienced under the leadership of Director Kelly LoBianco. I am not here to relitigate a personal grievance. I am here because the people who were harmed in this environment, many of whom no longer feel safe enough to speak, deserve to have their experiences acknowledged in a public record. What I share here is truthful, consistent with my own documentation, and reflects a pattern I witnessed not only in my own experience but in the experiences of colleagues who left, were pushed out, or who remain and suffer in silence.</p> <p>One of the most damaging patterns I experienced under Director Kelly's leadership was the consistent use of passive-aggressive behavior as a management tool. Rather than addressing concerns or performance issues directly and professionally, Director Kelly routinely communicated disapproval through indirect means, withholding information, offering backhanded acknowledgments of work, giving deliberately vague instructions that set employees up to fail, and then expressing displeasure when outcomes did not meet expectations that had never been clearly stated.</p> <p>This pattern is particularly insidious because it is designed to maintain plausible deniability. There is rarely a single undeniable incident. Instead, there is a slow erosion of confidence, clarity, and psychological safety. Employees under this kind of management spend enormous cognitive and emotional energy trying to decode what their supervisor actually wants, anticipating shifting goalposts, and trying to avoid triggering responses they cannot predict, because those responses are never named openly. I lived this, and I know what it costs. Meetings would end without clear direction and then be followed by pointed comments, in email, in passing, in front of colleagues, implying I had failed to do something I was never clearly asked to do. Feedback was delivered not as constructive guidance but as insinuation, communicated just indirectly enough that addressing it directly would have made me appear unreasonable. That is not leadership. That is psychological maneuvering, and it has no place in a publicly funded government department.</p> <p>The second pattern I must speak to directly is retaliation. I want to use that word clearly and without equivocation, because I believe what I experienced and observed meets that standard. When employees raised concerns, about workload, unclear expectations, interpersonal conflict, or the conduct of leadership itself, the response was not resolution. It was punishment,</p>



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delivered incrementally and strategically enough that each individual instance could be explained away, but the cumulative pattern was unmistakable. Retaliation in environments like this rarely looks like a formal disciplinary action. It looks like being excluded from meetings you were previously included in. It looks like your work being quietly reassigned without explanation. It looks like being left off communications that directly affect your role, so that you appear uninformed in front of others. It looks like having your contributions minimized in group settings while being held to impossibly high standards in private ones. It looks like being watched more closely, documented more aggressively, and quietly positioned for failure, all while leadership maintains a public appearance of professionalism.

I experienced these dynamics directly after raising concerns within the department. I watched colleagues experience them as well. The message was unmistakable even when never spoken aloud: if you speak up, you will pay for it. That had a profound chilling effect on the entire team. People stopped advocating for themselves. People stopped flagging operational problems. People stopped bringing their full professional judgment to their work because they had learned that doing so carried personal risk. A government department cannot serve the public it exists to serve when its employees are operating inside a climate of fear. A director who cultivates that climate is failing in one of the most fundamental responsibilities of public leadership.

Beyond the active harms I have described, I also want to speak to what was absent, because neglect is its own form of harm, and the absence of support was as damaging as anything done directly. Effective leadership requires that supervisors provide clear guidance, ensure access to resources, advocate for their teams, and create conditions in which people can succeed. None of that was present in my experience. When I encountered obstacles, I was met with indifference or responses that placed the burden entirely on me to resolve problems that required leadership involvement. When I sought clarification, I received non-answers. When I needed institutional backing in cross-functional situations, I was left exposed and unsupported. This kind of professional abandonment sends a clear message: that the organization does not value your success, does not see your struggle, and will not show up when it matters. Over time, that message accumulates. It tells employees they are on their own, that excellence will not be recognized, effort will not be rewarded, and that the only safe strategy is to keep your head down and do the minimum to avoid negative attention. That is not an environment that produces good work. It is an environment that hollows out a workforce from the inside.

I want to be direct about the psychological harm I experienced, because what happens inside a department does not stay there. It follows people home, into their next roles, and into their personal lives. During my time under this leadership, I experienced chronic stress that affected my sleep, my concentration, and my ability to function at the level I knew myself capable of. I developed anxiety I had not previously had, rooted specifically in the unpredictability of my work environment and the knowledge that my efforts could not be evaluated fairly and that raising a concern was not safe. I experienced a gradual erosion of my professional confidence, not because

				<p>my skills had diminished, but because I had been operating in an environment that systematically undermined my ability to trust my own judgment. These are not abstract harms. They are real, documented effects of sustained exposure to toxic leadership, widely recognized in occupational health research as consequences of psychologically unsafe workplaces. What I experienced was not a sensitivity issue. It was a foreseeable and preventable harm that resulted directly from the leadership culture Director Kelly created. I was forced to seek support outside the workplace because the internal environment made any internal disclosure feel too risky. The fact that I could not seek help within the institution causing me harm is itself an indictment of the climate Director Kelly sustained.</p> <p>The harms I have described are not only personal, they are organizational and public in their consequences. A department led through fear, indirect communication, and retaliation does not perform at the level the public deserves. Staff turnover in toxic environments is high, and the institutional knowledge lost with each departure is never fully recovered. Employees who remain do so at enormous personal cost, their capacity to serve the public mission compromised by the energy required just to manage their own psychological safety. The Department of Economic Opportunity exists to serve vulnerable people and communities. Its staff are its most important resource. I am asking this board to take this seriously, review Director LoBianco's leadership, and act.</p>
		Item Total	5	
Grand Total			5	