

**Identifying Sustainable Funding for the Public Health Councils Program**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Los Angeles County and the nation experienced a disproportionate burden of illness and death befalling low-wage and essential workers, who were exposed at their places of employment. These workers continued showing up, supporting our economy and daily lives through peak infection rates despite the risks, to support themselves and their families, and maintain basic functions of society. Knowing that the average person spends roughly one-third of their adult life at work, what they do for a living and where they do it can have major implications on health.

The Board of Supervisors, working in close partnership with labor partners, worker centers, academic programs, community-based organizations, and the Department of Public Health (DPH) established the Public Health Councils (PHC) Program in November 2020. The Board motion directed a new approach to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in workplace settings when traditional enforcement mechanisms struggled to reach workers facing the greatest risks. In anticipation of the end of the public health emergency in March 2023, the Board directed in November 2022 that the program be continued in unincorporated areas and cities in the County

MOTION

Mitchell \_\_\_\_\_

Horvath \_\_\_\_\_

Hahn \_\_\_\_\_

Barger \_\_\_\_\_

Solis \_\_\_\_\_

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that adopted the program into their municipal code to continue the strategy of reaching workers to improve sanitary conditions and remove health threats in workplace settings. The program has since expanded to address a multitude of workplace conditions that directly impact long-term and short-term health outcomes of workers in low-wage and high hazard industries.

As a result, the PHC Program is considered a groundbreaking and NACCHO (National Association of County and City Health Officials)-award winning initiative. In fact, the program reaches over 100,000 low-wages workers annually, has distributed over 1.3 million units of personal protective equipment and COVID-19 test kits, has established 146 PHCs, and ensures the County remains ready to mobilize against the next public health emergency.

The success of the PHC Program is achieved in partnership with contracted training and technical assistance partners. DPH trains and certifies participating worker and community-based organizations' staff in conducting outreach and education on various public health topics, distributing personal protective equipment, hosting mobile vaccine clinics at worksites and worker centers, assessing workplace safety, and coordinating with public health officials around worker needs. Crucially, the contracted worker organizations support the establishment of worker-led PHCs at worksites to monitor compliance with health and labor regulations, educate employees and employers about conditions, and make referrals for local and State enforcement. The County's size, combined with the understaffing of State labor enforcement agencies,

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makes local-level worker engagement essential. The PHC Program utilizes a peer-to-peer education model, looking to workers as the experts in identifying and preventing unsanitary and unsafe conditions.

The PHC Program has since led to the establishment of the Office of Worker Health & Safety (OWHS) in 2024, which currently manages the program. DPH presently utilizes a third-party fiscal intermediary to contract with the 15 worker and community-based organizations (including two training and technical assistance organizations), selected based on their expertise in worker issues and industry-specific hazards, ability to serve high priority languages, and track record of established trust within hard-to-reach low-wage industries. Current industries supported by the program include, car wash, food manufacturing, garment manufacturing, domestic & household services, gardening, grocery & retail, massage, residential care facilities for the elderly, restaurants, nail salons, warehouses & storage, and construction; languages represented include Chinese, English, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese.

Additionally, the OWHS has dedicated staff who serve as Program Liaisons to cultivate and maintain close relationships with contracted worker and community-based organizations through hands-on technical assistance during monthly one-on-ones, monthly skills-building training and coalition meetings with contracted organizations, and co-convened outreach events and vaccine clinics. The Program Liaisons have directly contributed to the success of this model through the trust that has been built between

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DPH and impacted worker populations. The PHC infrastructure has allowed DPH to partner with worker and community-based organizations to mobilize rapidly against climate disasters and emerging health threats including, wildfires, silicosis among engineered stone workers, Mpox, Bird Flu, and extreme heat. The 2025 LA Fires were an example of the value of the PHC Program, positioning DPH to activate the network of 15 contracted worker and community-based organizations within 24 hours to distribute personal protective equipment and resources directly to workers in need.

Unfortunately, funding for the PHC Program expires in the fall of 2026, and with the loss of funding, the County is at risk of losing critical infrastructure and capacity built over the last five years to support hard-to-reach and vulnerable workers across low-wage and high-hazard industries in the County. DPH has submitted a Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget request for permanent funding for the PHC Program. The request would fund two permanent positions the Office of Worker Health & Safety to support the administrative and program activities and \$1,875,000 annually to contract directly with 15 worker and community-based organizations. This request would bring all PHC Program management and activities in-house to reduce administrative costs associated with utilizing a third-party intermediary.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Officer in partnership with the Department of Public Health to report back in writing during the 2026-27 Supplemental Budget phase on:

1. Identified ongoing funding in the amount of \$2.3 million for the Public Health

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Council Program, this includes Net County Cost and/or any other appropriate funding sources.

2. Plans to wWork with State labor enforcement agencies, including Cal/OSHA, and the Center for Strategic Partnerships to explore State and philanthropic opportunities to help preserve the Public Health Council Program.

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HLS:jgd