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MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS October 27, 2026

AND JANICE HAHN

Strengthening Accountability in County Communications Spending and Support for Local, Ethnic, and Community-Serving Media

Los Angeles County is home to more than 10 million residents and one of the most diverse populations in the nation. Residents rely on timely, accurate and culturally relevant information to understand changes in government policy, access public benefits, comply with new requirements and connect with essential services. Local, ethnic, community and hyperlocal news organizations play an important role in this information ecosystem by serving as trusted messengers for immigrant communities, communities of color, low-income households, seniors and residents with limited English proficiency.

These outlets provide news and public service information in multiple languages and maintain deep, longstanding relationships with the communities they serve. For many residents, particularly those who may not be effectively reached through traditional government communications channels, these organizations are among the most trusted sources of information. At the same time, local and community news organizations face significant financial challenges, including declining advertising revenue, reduced newsroom capacity and broader structural changes affecting local journalism.

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California has also recognized the essential role of local journalism in supporting informed communities, civic engagement and access to reliable public information. Through the California Civic Media Program, Governor Gavin Newsom and the Legislature allocated $20 million in state funding, matched by additional private support, to strengthen local journalism across California, including community-based news organizations that provide trusted reporting and public information to underserved communities. Additionally, the State approved $10 million to fund journalism fellowships based out of U.C. Berkeley, $5 million to strengthen the State's multi-lingual media system, and $3 million for ethnic media outreach grants. These investments reflect growing recognition of the role local, ethnic, and community news organizations play in connecting residents with reliable information.

At the same time, residents are navigating rapid and significant changes at the federal level, including heightened immigration enforcement activity and changes affecting public benefits, health care coverage, housing assistance, nutrition assistance and other essential services. These developments have increased the need for clear, timely and accessible public information so residents can understand their rights, determine eligibility and access available resources.

Effective government communication requires more than producing information. It requires reaching residents through the sources they trust, in the languages they

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understand and in the communities where they live. Strengthening coordination with local, ethnic, community and hyperlocal media organizations can help the County better reach residents who may not be effectively served through traditional government communications channels.

In 2020, the Board of Supervisors directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to evaluate the County's utilization and investment in ethnic and hyperlocal media and develop recommendations for integrating these outlets into County communications strategies. The CEO's subsequent report found that while most County departments utilized ethnic and hyperlocal media for outreach and education efforts, the County lacked comprehensive data on advertising expenditures, utilization rates and outcomes across departments. The report identified the need for improved reporting, coordination and accountability.

Other local governments have recognized the need for a more coordinated approach to engaging ethnic and community media. In New York City (NYC), a 2013 City University of New York study revealed that 82% of city advertising funds went to mainstream outlets, while community outlets received only 18%. Despite Latinos representing nearly 30% of the City’s population, only 4% of funds went to Spanish language publications in a one-year period. In response, NYC mandated at least 50% of advertising funds go to community and ethnic media and established the Mayor's Office

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of Ethnic and Community Media to serve as a central point of coordination between City agencies and the diverse media outlets that serve New Yorkers. The office helps City agencies identify and work with ethnic and community media, provides guidance and training on engaging these outlets, maintains a directory of media organizations, and supports greater coordination of City advertising and communications efforts. New York City has also established policies to increase the use of ethnic and community media in City advertising and improve transparency around public advertising expenditures.

New York City's approach provides a potential model for how government can better coordinate its relationships with diverse media outlets and use existing communications resources to reach residents more effectively. Following the spending mandate, NYC advertising allocations to community media outlets outperformed expectations reaching 84% of total advertising budgets. Over the five-year period since implementation, $72 million has been redirected into the local media ecosystem. A centralized approach can give agencies the tools and information they need to identify outlets serving specific communities while creating greater consistency in how public information and advertising opportunities are shared.

Los Angeles County has an opportunity to consider whether a similar structure could work here. With more than 10 million residents across 88 cities and unincorporated areas, the County must communicate with residents across a vast and diverse geographic

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area. County departments regularly communicate with residents about health care, public benefits, housing, immigration services, public safety, disaster response and other essential services. Local, ethnic, community and hyperlocal media can play an important role in ensuring this information reaches residents who rely on neighborhood-based and multilingual sources. A Countywide framework could provide departments with a more coordinated way to identify and engage these outlets while improving the County's ability to understand how its communications and advertising resources are being used. It could also help ensure that public information reaches the communities it is intended to serve.

Therefore, in order to strengthen the County's ability to communicate with its diverse population, improve the reach and effectiveness of public information, and better connect residents with timely, accurate and culturally relevant information, Los Angeles County should evaluate the feasibility of establishing a Countywide framework for engaging local, ethnic, community and hyperlocal media, informed by approaches used by other local governments, including New York City.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in consultation with the Internal Services Department (ISD), Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative and other relevant County departments, including the Office of Immigrant Affairs, to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a Countywide framework to strengthen the use of

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local, ethnic, community and hyperlocal media for County advertising, public information and outreach, informed by the approach taken by New York City's Mayor's Office of Ethnic and Community Media, and report back to the Board in writing in 120 days with findings and recommendations, including any administrative, operational, legal, procurement and fiscal considerations;

2. Direct the CEO to report back to the Board in writing within 120 days on the availability of funding, including external sources such as philanthropy and media organizations, to partner with an academic institution to conduct and produce an independent report detailing current advertising and marketing expenditures by County departments, including spending through prime contractors, subcontractors, media buying firms, and other downstream publishers and vendors, with the goal of highlighting the level of expenditures directed to local, ethnic, community and hyperlocal news outlets;
3. Direct the CEO, in consultation with ISD, ARDI and the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors, to assess how the ARDI Policies, Procedures and Practices (PPP) Assessment Tools could be incorporated into County procurement and contracting practices for communications, advertising and media-buying services, including solicitation and contract language and vendor outreach, and report back to the Board in writing within 120 days with recommendations to expand

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opportunities for local, ethnic, community and hyperlocal media organizations and other diverse vendors;

4. Direct the CEO to engage with local, ethnic, community and hyperlocal media organizations and other relevant stakeholders to inform the report backs and include a summary of stakeholder input.

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