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**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN
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Addressing Lifeguard Shortage in LA County Department of Parks and Recreation

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) offers an array of diverse water and aquatics facilities and programs for residents of all ages and skill levels. DPR manages 6 year-round aquatic centers, 25 seasonal swimming pools 14 lakes, including 3 boating and recreation lakes, 9 fishing lakes and 3 swim beaches and 23 splash pads. Additionally, DPR has provided over 100,000 swim lessons and serves nearly 210,000 participants through its EveryBody Swims programming. Access to aquatics and water sport programs provide many benefits to communities, including offering places to cool off on a hot day, providing lifesaving swimming skills, and opportunities to bring families together for affordable water recreation, and get in some quality exercise.

The Board of Supervisors (Board) recognize that pool programming is essential for our communities. As our summers continue to get longer it is important that we extend our summer pool programs for our residents to enjoy. On August 31, 2021, the Board approved a motion authored by Supervisor Hahn and Supervisor Barger directing DPR and the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to extend the summer swim season through the end of October. In subsequent budget cycles the funding was allocated to support the program, including \$11 million of ARP funds for pool infrastructure improvements. While our we have rushed to make sure our pools

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are ready for the summer season, we face the challenge of keeping our pools and lakes adequately staffed.

Throughout Los Angeles County, the State, and the nation, jurisdictions are facing lifeguard shortages. The American Life Guard Association reported that in 2023 the lifeguard shortage is predicted to be “just as bad” or “even worse” than the previous summer. From New York to Seattle, jurisdictions are reporting the impact of the lifeguard shortage to their aquatic operations. These factors are especially felt in Los Angeles County.

The lifeguard shortage at DPR is the result of several compounding factors. Including the continued impact of the COVID pandemic. Public swimming pools and learn to swim programs and school aquatic sports programming were closed during the pandemic reducing the number of opportunities to train as a lifeguard. DPR’s budget curtailment in aquatics released lifeguards not involved as Disaster Service Workers, as a result, many did not come back as lifeguards post-pandemic. In addition, the lifeguard shortage is causing jurisdictions to compete and provide higher wages than DPR. Higher or equal pay rates in other fields and that require less training are more appealing to potential candidates. Lastly, we have a lengthy and cumbersome hiring process for DPR lifeguards.

DPR has shifted to a year-round lifeguard recruitment process. The department began its lifeguard recruitment in September - when in previous years would commence in January conducted recruitment visits to nearly 260 high schools. They offered year-round Lifeguard Ready Training programs (19 to date and continuing), held more than double the Lifeguard

Academies (from 5 in 2023 to 13 expected by the end of the year), and lowered the age to 16 to expand the candidate pool. A communications firm was brought in to develop promotional and marketing materials to support recruitment. Despite these best efforts, DPR faces a lifeguard shortage to properly staff pools and lakes.

DPR has made a concerted effort to hire low-income youth of color into our aquatics program to represent the communities that we serve. With the establishment of the Lifeguard Ready Training Program (LRT), DPR is increasing access to BIPOC youth into the aquatics program, but the existing hiring process represents a significant barrier, with many of the LRT candidates' parents being required to take time off work in order to complete the hiring and medical process.

To become a DPR lifeguard, candidates must engage in a process that takes an estimated 16 to 31 weeks start to finish, which is an especially cumbersome process for teenagers, who depend on their parents for travel and to accompany them to Live Scan and Medical appointments. The current process limits medicals to specific geographic location and at specific hours during the traditional business day.

DPR has the lengthiest hiring process for lifeguards than any other jurisdiction in Los Angeles County. Candidates must submit an online application, pass a swim test, get Live Scan, complete a medical, and finish an academy before they are hired. Once candidates complete the hiring process, they attend a new guard training and upon successful completion they must again apply to promote to the position of lifeguard. While the overall steps in process

are similar to other jurisdictions in Los Angeles County, the processing of Live Scan and clearing medicals required by County policies cause delay by several weeks.

The consequence of the lifeguard shortage for DPR facilities, is that they must operate at limited capacity instead of at full operational capacity. In order to address the continued long-term impact of Covid closures and ensure DPR can properly staff its aquatic facilities, the County must explore its lifeguard hiring process.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation; the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), including CEO Risk Management; County Counsel; and Department of Human Resources, including Occupational Health Program, to evaluate the length and efficiency of the lifeguard hiring process, including medicals, and develop recommendations to increase access to lifeguarding, decrease the length of the hiring process, including, but not limited to hiring, recruitment, training, salary, and salary competitiveness, and report back in writing in 90 days.

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