

August 4, 2023

Hon. Rex Richardson, Hon. Mary Zendajas,
Hon. Cindy Allen, Hon. Kristina Duggan,
Hon. Daryl Supernaw, Hon. Megan Kerr,
Hon. Dr. Suely Saro, Hon. Roberto Uranga,
Hon. Al Austin II, Hon. Dr. Joni, Ricks-Oddie,
Tom Modica, Teresa Chandler, Wally Hebeish, Kelly Colopy,
Stephanie Chmelik, Teresa Gomez
411 W. Ocean Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90802

Subject: Community Support for Cathy Snuggs, Violence Prevention Coordinator

Dear Honorable Mayor, City Council, City Manager, City Manager, and DHHS Director:

In 2020, the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Report acknowledged racism as a public health crisis, articulated goals to dismantle systemic racism and establish Long Beach as a model City of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Members of the Long Beach community are profoundly concerned and extremely alarmed about the recent termination of Ms. Snuggs from her position as a Public Health Professional I. She served as the Violence Prevention Coordinator for the City of Long Beach from February 28, 2022 to July 26, 2023. Those who know Ms. Snuggs, including members of the Long Beach Advancing Peace Steering Committee, find the City's decision to be beyond absurd.

Rather than commending Cathy Snuggs for what she has done and was prepared to do to promote the Advancing Peace Initiative, her superiors chose to abruptly dismiss her on the same day of the Collaborative Network meeting with over 390 emailed participants. The posted agenda included a report and discussion of the June 30th Leaders of Violence Prevention Symposium, registration for workgroups (Westside workgroup, Safe Passage, and Healing Response), and summer activities designed to avoid tensions and reduce spikes in conflict to mitigate potential violence. Instead, the participants learned the meeting was canceled because Ms. Snuggs was banished from serving on behalf of the City in arguably one of the most important positions in City government as the Violence Prevention Coordinator. This revelation contradicts the Health Department's announcement that this vital meeting was canceled due to "scheduling conflicts." Preposterous.

Based on our observations, the City has not provided Cathy Snuggs with the range of necessary tools and resources to be even more effective in her role as Violence Prevention Coordinator. This was keenly observed in the delivery of the June 30, 2023, Leaders of Violence Prevention Symposium. Nevertheless, she did an outstanding job and the event was well-received. In the informed opinion of many Long

Beach community members, Ms. Snuggs performed a myriad of critical violence prevention efforts that were specifically designed to mitigate violence and promote peace in those neighborhoods that face the most difficult challenges to living a quality life in this City.

We, the undersigned, stand in firm support of Cathy Snuggs and strongly believe her termination was without merit. Reinstating Ms. Snuggs is the most ethical demonstration of the City's obligation to community violence prevention, intervention, and racial equity. Her reinstatement will realign the City to its self-imposed commitment to effectively address the intersectionality of systemic racism and violence prevention.

The largest Long Beach racial/ethnic groups are Hispanic (43.9%) followed by White (27.8%) Black (12.7%) and Asian (12.6%) (US Census, <https://www.census.gov/>, July 31, 2023). Tragically, Black constituents comprised a disproportionate number of all gun violence deaths in Long Beach between 2013-2023 (National Gun Violence Memorial, <https://gunmemorial.org/CA/long-beach>, August 1, 2023).

Cathy Snuggs' dedication and effectiveness as the only Black violence prevention coordinator have been commendable. Long Beach is recognized as one of the most diverse cities in the nation. However, the Long Beach Post recently reported that the City of Long Beach is reaching an alarmingly high rate of hate crimes against Black and LGBTQI+ community members. "According to the latest Long Beach data, after 12 reported hate crimes in 2021 and 13 in 2022, this year's total was 16 reported hate crimes as of June 30" (<https://lbpost.com/news/long-beach-hate-crimes-2022/>, July 31, 2023). Due to the increase of racially motivated violence, Ms. Snuggs recognized the disconnection between the City and its community-based organizations which are responsible for providing additional support to victims. Thus, Ms. Snuggs began to strengthen Black-affirming initiatives and also forged relationships with both Filipino and Cambodian leadership including but not limited to: Jesvin Seida, Sithy Bin, and United Cambodian Community. This was in response to the rise in anti-Black and anti-Asian community violence. In addition, Ms. Snuggs continued to support the existing successful Latinx organizations and leaders such as Miguel Lugo of Homeboy Industries, Hugo Gonzales of Success Stories, Local Hearts, Latinos in Action, and Puente LA.

Furthermore, Cathy Snuggs elevated the importance of parents and women in violence prevention. After a year of working as the Violence Prevention Coordinator, Ms. Snuggs strengthened Long Beach Advancing Peace's relationship with powerful women leaders and women-led organizations like AOC7 (Rocio Torres and Mary Simmons), Latinos in Action (Martha Cota), Puente LA (Hilda Gaytan), Centro Cha (Jessica Quintana), and April Parker Foundation (April Parker). Ms. Snuggs's tireless efforts have been devoted to creating a safer and more inclusive environment for all communities in Long Beach.

It is clear to many members of the Long Beach community that Cathy Snuggs' termination was an unjust action, and we find it deeply troubling that her superiors

neglected the vital contributions she made to the community. The draconian decision to extinguish Ms. Snuggs' progress while the City is experiencing a surge in violent crime and a significant uptick in hate crimes has created a trusted leadership void that will undoubtedly impact the effectiveness and continuity of violence prevention efforts. The loss of Ms. Snuggs' expertise and experience will be continuously felt by the City's administrative and peer staff as well as the community as a whole, and it raises significant questions about the commitment of the City's leadership to address the unique challenges faced by diverse communities. This decision is a blatant contradiction to the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Report's findings and recommendations.

We believe that Ms. Snuggs' dismissal tarnishes both her reputation as well as the City of Long Beach, and also reflects poorly on the values of fairness, equity, and inclusivity that we expect from our City administration. We call upon you to thoroughly review the circumstances surrounding Ms. Snuggs' termination and take immediate steps to rectify this unjust situation. We urge you to reinstate her rightful position as Violence Prevention Coordinator and provide the necessary support for her to continue her impactful work.

Moreover, we encourage the City of Long Beach to undertake a comprehensive review of its personnel practices and policies to ensure that such incidents do not repeat in the future. Promoting a diverse and inclusive work environment is not just a moral imperative but a strategic advantage that fosters innovation and community trust.

In conclusion, we unequivocally stand united in support of Cathy Snuggs and her important contributions to violence prevention in the City. We believe that by rectifying this egregious error, the City of Long Beach can demonstrate its commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable community for all its residents as outlined in the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Report which was unanimously approved by the City Council. Her expertise, dedication, and documented track record are indispensable to the public health, safety, and well-being of the entire Long Beach community. The City's political legitimacy can only be authentically reaffirmed by promptly reinstating Ms. Snuggs to her former position as the Violence Prevention Coordinator, and thereby restoring her good name.

Respectfully submitted,

Concerned Members of the Long Beach Community