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April 20, 2020

RE: Support for items 20-0349 & 20-0350: Equity Toolkit Presentation & Equity Lens on COVID-19 Response

Dear City Councilmembers, Mayor Garcia, and City Manager Modica:

I am writing on behalf of Greater Long Beach Interfaith Community Organization (ICO) to express support for two items related to ensuring that our City centers equity in its assessments and decision making around COVID-19 response, recovery, and beyond.

ICO is a faith-based community organizing project here in Long Beach, actively organizing in immigrant communities. ICO is part of the Building Healthy Communities initiative in Long Beach, which has long been a proponent of the City's involvement in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity and we are encouraged by the participation of City staff in GARE, the establishment of the Office of Equity, and the development of the Equity Toolkit.

In order for our City to make strides toward redressing the inequities that have been created through racist policy throughout our history we must be proactive in our creation and assessment of policy. One important step toward this is considering all policy decisions through an equity lens. Having the full Council and City staff who are involved in creating policy educated on and using the Equity Toolkit to evaluate and make policy decisions marks an important step forward for our City. When it comes to equity, we must strive to bake it in to all that we do rather than trying to sprinkle it on top.

Along those lines, we support the requests to have the City Manager work with the Office of Equity to establish a policy requiring a health equity lens statement on all staff reports related to COVID-19 impacts and response, and to have the Office of Equity to train the Joint Information Center on utilization of the Long Beach Equity Toolkit.

Everyone, regardless of their background or social status, is impacted by COVID-19 in some way. That said, we are already seeing how people of color, particularly African Americans and immigrants, are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. In Long Beach, Black residents are overrepresented in the number of cases of people contracting COVID-19 and being hospitalized by it. If what we are seeing nationally happens in Long Beach, Black residents will also die from

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the virus at much higher rates than other groups of people. Furthermore, people of color are overrepresented in the groups particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, including those without insurance and paid sick leave, the incarcerated and homeless populations, and those in low-wage, service and care industries that have high levels of interaction with other people. Finally, many residents of color and immigrants are locked out of COVID-19 relief efforts--be it Federal stimulus money or local small-business supports. Including an equity lens on all COVID-19 related staff reports will help ensure that our response efforts reach all who call Long Beach home.

Long Beach has long faced racial and economic disparities that lead to unequal health outcomes for our residents. Unfortunately, COVID-19 presents us with nothing new in this regard. However, it does give us an opportunity to do better and to forge a new path forward for our City--one that puts equity front and center in all of its policy considerations.

Thank you to the sponsors of these items and to all the Councilmembers for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patrick Kennedy

Patrick Kennedy
Executive Director