



RexRichardson
Long Beach City Councilmember, 9th District

Date: July 5, 2016

To: Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Rex Richardson, Ninth District *RR*
Councilwoman Lena Gonzalez, First District *LG*
Vice Mayor Suja Lowenthal, Second District *SL*
Councilmember Roberto Uranga, Seventh District *RU*

Subject: Establishment of the Office of Equity, Access, and Prevention

RECOMMENDATION:

Request the City Manager to explore the feasibility of realigning the initiatives of the City's Safe Long Beach Violence Prevention Plan as well as the Language Access Program into the Department of Health and Human Services; and

Evaluate the feasibility and benefits of establishing a new "Office of Equity, Access, and Prevention," or similar title, which aligns these critical initiatives with other key city programs and initiatives, and report back to the City Council within 90 days.

Discussion

The term "equity" can be defined as "fairness or justice in the way people are treated." For a community, true equity will be realized when all have access to the opportunities necessary to satisfy their essential needs, advance their well-being and achieve their full potential. Key factors to accessing opportunities in an equitable manner is that disenfranchised communities need to be free of violence, have violence disrupted through intervention and prevention programs, that policies and ordinances consider the equity or fairness of their application on these communities, and for non-English speaking communities to be able to access services in their native language.

With recent legislation such as AB 109 and Prop 47 and growing pressures on public safety, now more than ever, we have a tremendous opportunity to "double down" on violence prevention by establishing a dedicated office and realigning the Safe Long Beach Violence Prevention Plan (Safe Long Beach), the Language Access Program, and similar work in the Department of Health and Human Services (Health Department) to support true equity in Long Beach. We will not be able to effectively create systems change and promote equity without taking these steps.



The request for evaluation of the feasibility of realigning services is intended to have staff determine if there may be an opportunity to align these programs in such a way that they can build upon one another and provide services in an equitable and fair manner. Realigning our complimentary initiatives into one central “office” in the Health Department will bring a number of benefits to the city including expanding our capacity to serve our residents, allowing for more coordination of efforts, and increasing our ability to find and secure grants from government and private funds. In addition, violence and fear of violence are major factors that undermine health and worsen health disparities. In fact, violence prevention is now seen as one of the major public health issues of modern times. Preventing violence is an essential component of any effort to achieve equity and create healthier communities.

In Long Beach, there are numerous initiatives that work to achieve equity for all residents, many of which are coordinated under Safe Long Beach in the Development Services Department. The City Council adopted Safe Long Beach in May 2014 to address a broad safety agenda aimed at reducing all forms of violence, including domestic abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, hate crimes, bullying, gang violence, and violent crime. Other initiatives in the City that focus on equity can be found within the Health Department including family support programming at the Center for Families and Youth, the Nurse Family Partnership, and most importantly, their current work with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity.

While Long Beach has long had a commitment to a wide-ranging and inclusive strategy to preventing violence and creating better life outcomes for our residents, the work is fragmented across departments. Many cities across the country are finding innovative ways to bolster their violence prevention and equity efforts, and create systems change. Cities are realigning programs, services and initiatives that focus specifically on equity, race, social justice and human rights into one office. Some examples are:

- Office of Equity and Human Rights- Portland, OR
- Equity Office- Austin, TX
- Office of Diversity and Human Rights- Salt Lake City, UT
- Dept. of Race and Equity- Oakland, CA
- Office of Civil Rights- Seattle, WA

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact to providing this report.