



COUNCILMEMBER
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Date: April 16, 2019

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

From: Councilmember Rex Richardson, Ninth District *RR*
 Councilmember Jeannine Pearce, Second District *JP*
 Vice Mayor Dee Andrews, Sixth District *DA*
 Councilmember Roberto Uranga, Seventh District *(R)*

Subject: Long Beach Youth Poet Laureate Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Request the City Manager to work with the Library Services Department and the Arts Council of Long Beach to establish a Youth Poet Laureate Program in Long Beach.

Discussion

Long Beach is a city that prides itself on its commitment to education, literacy, and the arts. In the past two years, the City has opened the state-of-the-art Michelle Obama Neighborhood Library, increased hours at multiple branch libraries through the addition of Sunday hours, and is near completion on the construction of the new Main Library.

Likewise, the City boasts an esteemed partnership with local non-profit, the Arts Council for Long Beach (Arts Council), whose mission is "to foster creativity and culture, enliven communities and enable a thriving creative economy." Long Beach is home to a vibrant art community, as art is displayed across the City in many forms: as performances in our public spaces, murals on building walls, and observed in the shape of spoken and written word.

Establishing a Youth Poet Laureate Program in Long Beach would further enhance the city's current literacy and arts programming, with a focus on uplifting and celebrating the youth voice. Across the country, 35 cities have followed the City of New York's lead in establishing a Youth Poet Laureate Program, including Los Angeles, Oakland, Seattle, Houston, and Baltimore. The goals of most of these programs are similar: to capture the essence of the city, to inspire creativity in all residents, and to bring the literary arts to people who may have limited access or few opportunities to poetry or expressive writing. These can be done through classes or workshops at branch libraries, public readings, poetry festivals, and original works. Youth Poet Laureate Programs also foster youth leadership and development through creativity, civic and community engagement, as youth serve as official ambassadors of their city's literary arts community.



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City staff should explore various ways to ensure that a Youth Poet Laureate Program can be established and sustained in Long Beach, by engaging local community organizations and partners, such as the Arts Council for Long Beach, throughout this process.

Fiscal Impact

No Financial Management review was able to be conducted due to the urgency and time sensitivity of this item.