

Date: March 16, 2021

R-12

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, First District
Councilmember Roberto Uranga, Seventh District
Councilwoman Cindy Allen, Second District
Councilwoman Suely Saro, Sixth District

Subject: MI VIDA CUENTA Latino Health Initiative

RECOMMENDATION

Request the City Manager, or designee, to work with appropriate departments to report back to City Council within 30 days on funding a MI VIDA CUENTA COVID-19 Latino Health Initiative. The MI VIDA CUENTA initiative should include sufficient resources for providing continuous health education, equitable vaccine distribution, appropriate food distributions, and mental health care for the Latino Community including undocumented residents.

DISCUSSION

COVID-19 has been plaguing the country for over a year now and Long Beach has done an amazing job of reacting to this unprecedented pandemic. However, COVID-19 has done one thing more than anything: highlight our city's inequities.

The Latino Community has been the hardest hit and data shows that it aligns with the low income areas of our city. Data has also shown that these communities are also the least likely to have access to internet, city services, and proper health care. This is not a new problem but rather one that has been exacerbated and highlights by the pandemic.

What is a new issue is that Latinos have born the brunt of the unemployment crisis caused by the pandemic. The Latino Community makes up the majority of workers in the hardest hit industries and thus make up the largest population losing their jobs, available income, ability to pay for basic needs like rent, food, or healthcare. The data also shows that Latinos who are fortunate enough to remain employed are in essential jobs that require working on-site. Without the luxury of being able to work from home they are at a higher risk of exposing themselves to COVID-19.

Latinos Contra Covid was a task force created with community-based organizations and Latino leaders within City Staff with the purpose of finding solutions to stop the spread of COVID-19 among the Latino Community. So far this task force has been able to identify challenges unique to the Latino Community in regards to COVID-19 spread, caused issues, and barriers to vaccination. This task force began to seek solution. It began with providing equity vaccination clinics targeting the hard-to-reach community members who continue to be affected by the

digital divide. Through this task force we have been able to vaccinate over 1500 residents. There is still so much work though to be done.

As the vaccine becomes more readily available the City must address that there is a significant hesitancy amongst the Latino Community when it comes to the COVID-19 vaccine. Education is more important than ever within the Latino Community because in order for Long Beach to reach the percentage necessary for herd immunity it must include the majority of the Latino Community. Education on the benefits of receiving the vaccine and addressing the sources of misinformation are paramount for the success of Long Beach's vaccination goal.

It is important that we continue to learn what is needed to reduce the inequities amongst the Latino Community that have been highlighted by COVID-19 as soon as possible. Latino Communities in our city continue to suffer around food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, job security, and equitable access to healthcare.

This request should fund a comprehensive, actionable, and grassroots-focused equity initiative dedicated to addressing the disparities that have disproportionately impacted the Latino Community both by the spread of COVID-19 and the City's process of vaccine distribution. This can be accomplished by:

- Engaging marginalized communities with the goal of improving health literacy, combatting misinformation, and building public confidence in our pandemic response and vaccination efforts;
- Being respectful of community concerns and the legacies of systemic racism in government and medicine;
- Ensuring that all public health outreach and communication prioritizes language access to guarantee every Long Beach resident—especially in Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog-speaking communities—isn't left out of pandemic response and vaccine distribution initiatives;
- Create a policy that demonstrably correlates City of Long Beach efforts, resources, and attention as it relates to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and rollout of vaccinations with the areas and communities that have been impacted by the pandemic to the greatest degree;
- Creating robust alternatives to digital information while creating ambitious programs to allow more Long Beach residents access to the internet;
- Create a program to engage community-based organizations to help with the efforts of addressing the needs in the Latino Community and should include utilizing the existing promoters within our community who are trusted messengers.

Due to the timing of this item no Financial Review was possible.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

With the Long Beach Recovery Act being announced and steps being taken to address the realities of post-COVID life in Long Beach, this item needs to be heard as soon as possible to best direct City Staff to allocate appropriate funds for this initiative.

FISCAL IMPACT

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

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mary Zendejas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, District 1