



Date: April 19, 2022

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

From: Vice Mayor Rex Richardson, 9th District

Subject: National Poetry Month/Poet Laureate Program Update

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to receive and file a presentation from Philosophy on National Poetry Month, and;

Recommendation to direct the Department of Library Services to partner with the Arts Council of Long Beach to prepare and update on the Youth Poet Laureate Program and return to council within 30 days.

Discussion

In April 2019, the Council unanimously approved to establish a Youth Poet Laureate Program (Program) in Long Beach with a goal to further enhance the city's current literacy and arts programming, with a focus on uplifting and celebrating the youth voice. The program is an initiative of Urban Word, a national nonprofit based in New York City, in collaboration with local youth literary arts organizations. It was established in New York City in 2008 and has since then spread to 41 cities across the country, including Oakland, Los Angeles, Seattle, Houston, and Baltimore. The goals 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 goals are reached through classes or workshops at branch libraries, public readings, poetry festivals, and original works.

The purpose of the program is to develop and cultivate the unique voices of Long Beach Youth while creating platforms and spaces for them to be heard. The program helped in manifesting the city's commitment to critical literacy: literacy that extends beyond "reading and writing", and the promotion of self-awareness in individuals, communities, and society at large. One of the most important outcomes of the program is its greater goal of nurturing creative, professional, and civically engaged young leaders, as youth serve as official ambassadors of their city's literary arts community.

The Applicants of the Program must be Long Beach residents between the ages of 14 and 19 as well as be available to serve as Laureate for the program year (May- April).



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Applications are judged based on artistic merit, as well as community engagement and leadership. Each portfolio must include five original poems about Long Beach, with a focus on the city's natural advantages, resources, enterprises, attractions, climate, and facilities that make up the Long Beach experience. Each year, 30 teens will be chosen.

The Long Beach Youth Poet Laureate and the Poet Ambassadors will be invited to perform at public events throughout the program year and beyond. The Laureate will be asked to represent Long Beach and its youth at public and private events, as well as to serve as a role model for other youth in the community.

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the community, the Program was postponed and is set to launch as early as January 2023.

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.