



Legislation Text

File #: 21-0672, **Version:** 2

Recommendation to refer to the Government, Personnel, and Elections Committee for consideration the naming of the newly renovated North Health Facility, "The Ronald R. Arias Health Equity Center," in recognition of the legacy, contributions, and service of former Long Beach Director of Health and Human Services Ronald R. Arias.

In June 2016, the voters approved Measure A, a ballot initiative to fund a number of infrastructure projects in the city. Among those projects was a remodel of the North Health Facility in Houghton Park. The newly renovated health center, scheduled to open this summer, will feature youth violence prevention and reentry programs, workforce development programs, medical services to North Long Beach residents, a public health clinic with an emphasis on sexual health, and meeting rooms for program leaders from different supportive service organizations to provide outreach to local residents.

As we approach the unveiling of the newly renovated facility, it is befitting that the City of Long Beach commemorates former City Health and Human Services Director Ronald R. Arias' extensive contributions to health equity in our city by naming the newly renovated health center at Houghton Park, the Ronald R. Arias Health Equity Center.

Ronald R. Arias (Ron), a longtime Uptown Long Beach resident, is a public health champion who has dedicated his career and personal life to social justice, youth development and better health outcomes for all. Ron served in leadership of our City's Health Department for more than 22 years, with 12 of those years at the forefront as Department Director. Under his guidance, the Health Department had many policy and programming accomplishments, including the development and opening of the Miller Family Health Education Center, the creation of the City's Healthy Beverage and Snack Policy, and securing the more than \$1 million investment into North Long Beach by Kaiser Permanente through the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) Zone Initiative whose main activities were focused on Houghton Park and the surrounding neighborhoods. Ron's vision over the years for a healthy and equitable city has allowed Long Beach, but particularly North Long Beach, to be at the forefront of improving health inequities through policy and systems change.

Today, Ron continues to volunteer his time and efforts to various organizations and causes throughout Long Beach including the Children's Clinic Community Advisory Committee, the Earl B. and Loraine H. Miller Foundation, the Rancho Los Cerritos Foundation, and the Long Beach Latino Cultural Center steering committee. He is a true example of an advocate, mentor, and compassionate leader.

The renovated and expanded Ronald R. Arias Health Equity Center will be the perfect

complement to the Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center located right next door within Houghton Park. Both sites will provide needed community space, services and programs for youth, seniors, and families.

According to City of Long Beach administrative policy (AR8-7), "City-owned land, buildings and facilities will not normally be named after living persons unless the City Council deems it appropriate to take such action on the basis of a significant contribution, monetary or otherwise, which warrants a deviation from this policy guideline." Former director Ronald R. Arias most certainly meets the exception to this policy.

Special thanks to the members of the Ronald R. Arias Naming Steering Committee:

- Hon. Steven Neal
- Susana Gonzalez Edmond, Vice President, Mercury Public Affairs & Centro CHA

Board Member

- Mario Gonzalez, President, Centro CHA Board of Directors
- Shawna Herrera Stevens
- Jessica Quintana, Executive Director, Centro CHA

Special thanks to the Offices of Mary Zendejas, 151 District, and Roberto Uranga, 7th District, for joining us in support of this historic proposal.

Equity Lens

The proposal is consistent with Long Beach Reconciliation Initiative - Initial Report:

Goal 1: Strategy 1. End systemic racism in Long Beach, in all local government and partner agencies, through internal transformation.

A. Read past research, integrate it, and build on it by continuing to document the role of racism throughout the history of Long Beach and incorporate it into the Historic Context Statement and racial equity time line. Immediate

B. Create a process to review the names of public parks, schools (in partnership with LBUSD), buildings, and monuments with a racial equity lens. Short Term

In a column in the Hechinger Report in 2017, by Dr. Andre Perry, a contributing writer, is a David M. Rubenstein Fellow at The Brookings Institution founding dean of urban education at Davenport University in Grand Rapids, MI, racial equity in naming of public institutions and

landmarks is about making history, not erasing it. "The built environment is so much more than shelter, urban planning and architecture - it reflects our very commitment to democracy. Our statues are monuments of the state of our democracy as much as they honor our beloved."

This recommendation is appropriate and acknowledges cultural context. The City of Long Beach is updating its Historic Context Statement and preparing its first-ever historic context statement focused on Race and Suburbanization. These documents allow decisions to be rooted in a deeper understanding of the City's history and evolution, including the communities of color that have helped shape it.

Urgency Statement

Due to the upcoming reopening of the facility, urgency is requested for this item.

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

Approve recommendation.

REX RICHARDSON
VICE MAYOR, NINTH DISTRICT

MARY ZENDEJAS
COUNCILMEMBER, FIRST DISTRICT

ROBERTO URANGA
COUNCILMEMBER, SEVENTH DISTRICT