

## **Communication from Public**

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**Comments for Public Posting:** Letter attached below

January 12, 2021

The Honorable City Councilmembers  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Re: Establishing a Youth Development Department in the City of Los Angeles**

Dear Councilmembers:

Currently, Los Angeles is one of the few large cities in the United States without a dedicated youth department. Youth outcomes also trend negative: 200,000 live in poverty<sup>1</sup>, nearly 70,000 are disconnected from educational and workforce pipelines<sup>2</sup>, and tens of thousands<sup>3</sup> are impacted by the justice system. As policymakers continue to sort through the wreckage caused by COVID-19, these figures have not stayed immune: Between mid-March and late-April, 53 percent of statewide unemployment claims were made by young people ages 16 to 24.<sup>4</sup> At this point, only one thing is certain: the need for a department has been dramatically accelerated given the level of uncertainty youth and their families face in the pandemic.

The magnitude of complications facing the city demand that we do more. There should be an ongoing role for nonprofit advocates to deliver those solutions alongside city programs. By investing the necessary resources into a youth agency will begin the first steps in pursuing a systemic approach to youth development. A stand-alone department focused on prevention will allow for a restorative and comprehensive way of supporting youth and is an effective public safety strategy. The City's Youth Development Task Force is already working on a blueprint to create a unified department, and we encourage policymakers to complement its efforts by making a down payment. Once the initial investment is made, more resources could be devoted to expand the agency.

Los Angeles stands at a crossroads. The city is confronting unprecedented challenges, and has a unique opportunity to establish a Youth Development Department as the first step toward a more prosperous, safe and equitable future. We urge you to act now and take the steps necessary now to establish a **Youth Development Department** by creating the initial infrastructure and staffing for the department. The department will be instrumental in implementing the recommendations of the Executive Task Force on Youth Development that was established by the City Council to develop the framework for a department along with a citywide youth development strategy.

As a local LGBTQ+ led organization in the San Fernando Valley, this department is extremely critical in uplifting LGBTQ+ youth lives. The LGBTQ+ youth community is disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, state violence, and lack of access and discrimination, in housing, employment, and health care. This bill is extremely important to not only our mission as an organization, but in the broader fight for social and economic justice in the future of LGBTQ+ youth.

The work to ensure that Los Angeles is a place where all young people can thrive begins now. We call upon the city to establish a Youth Development Department and look forward to working in partnership on this important issue.

Respectfully,



Kevin Al Perez

President

Somos Familia Valle

<sup>1</sup> Ages 10 to 24. Source: American Community Survey, 2015, 5-year

<sup>2</sup> Fogg, N., & Harrington, P. (2016) Understanding the Diminished Prospects of Disconnected Youth in Los Angeles. Drexel Center for Labor Markets and Policy.

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.lacity.org/A-Safe-City/Arrest-Data-from-2020-to-Present/amvf-fr72>  
(Updated 9/30/20; Downloaded 10/19/20; Filter: ages 25 and under)

<sup>4</sup> <https://hildalsolis.org/la-county-to-identify-funding-to-continue-offering-young-people-work-experience-through-youthwork/>