

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Liz Amsden

**Date Submitted:** 06/17/2022 05:00 PM

**Council File No:** 11-1020-S3

**Comments for Public Posting:** I strongly oppose this motion. The Budget Advocates is a group that strives to improve the future for all Angelenos by addressing issues in the City's budget and services on behalf of Neighborhood Councils. To do so, we rely on contributions from the Neighborhood Councils. In the spring of 2021, DONE directed the City Clerk to remove the Budget Advocates from the Neighborhood Councils contribution form and replace it with "budget advocacy." This is currently the name of the account for Budget Advocate funds, but money contributed to budget advocacy in this manner would not go to the Budget Advocates. DONE's General Manager has sole discretion over allocation of these "budget advocacy" monies. Since one of the concerns raised by the General Manager was that she could not give money's to organizations other than the Budget Advocates, we suggested that DONE add sub-budgets for other groups in the same way that the Congress account is split into the Congress of Neighborhoods and the EmpowerLA Awards. Petty Santos from the City Clerk's office verbally confirmed this was feasible to the Budget Advocate leadership. The Budget Advocate co-chairs were subsequently advised by DONE's General Manager that City policy does not currently allow this to be done for Alliances and other groups. This is patently incorrect since Neighborhood Councils have always funded the Budget Advocates under City aegis through their contributions. The referenced motion is the direct result of DONE requesting the Arts, Parks, Health, Education and Neighborhoods committee to initiate a motion to remove the Budget Advocates name from the Ordinance under which they have received money. It has now been referred to the Budget and Finance Committee. As a watchdog organization addressing fiscal and service issues at City Hall including department budgets, we know the Budget and Finance Committee values our input and independence. On the surface, however, although the consequences of such a change would appear to have little impact on the City's budget the motion may not get the attention it deserves from this committee. Because, if passed by the full City Council, this would limit the ability of Neighborhood Councils or any City entity to choose to fund the Budget Advocates directly for the work we have done over the years and continue to do. The Budget Advocates do not represent only the

Neighborhood Councils who elect them. The Budget Advocates do not represent only the Neighborhood Councils who contributed funds to them. The Budget Advocates represent all Neighborhood Councils, all stakeholders and all Angelenos. The Budget Advocates pride themselves on being an independent voice free to make suggestions on priorities and to criticize waste. We should not be beholden to any individual in one of the organizations that we are tasked to evaluate. In addition to restricting our independence and funding, the change being contemplated would also limit the ability of any Neighborhood Council to set and fulfill its own goals. It is inappropriate for anyone outside of those voting the funds to separately determine who should get how much and for what. This removal of the ability of Neighborhood Councils to operate freely is a curtailment of their independence, could set a dangerous precedent and lead to the invalidation of the entire Neighborhood Council experiment of which the City was, at least for many years, so proud. Liz Amsden Co-Chair 2016-2021 Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates