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April 23, 2019

The Honorable Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair
Budget and Finance Committee
Attention: Andrew Choi, Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmember Krekorian:

PROPOSED BUDGET FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2019-20

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding our proposed Department on Disability (DOD) budget for FY 2019-20. We appreciate the support of the Council as well as the leadership of the Mayor's Office, the CAO, and CLA in working with us to provide resources critical to serving the needs of people with disabilities, providing services to people living with HIV, and ensuring the City's compliance with the mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other disability laws.

While many of our core functions are included in the Mayor's Proposed Budget, please allow me to highlight a few key items and discuss related recommendations that will have a major impact for DOD and the City, with a total cost of under \$240,000.

1. "Lead" CASp (\$119,985). The Mayor's budget proposal extends the authority to hire a pool of CASps to assist in the implementation of the City's Self Evaluation and Transition Plan. However, it is critical that we also receive dedicated funding for the Lead CASp services (to be procured via RFQ) that the Department needs to respond to immediate and high-priority ADA Compliance-related requests received on a day to day basis from the Mayor's Office, City Council, Constituents, and City departments. **This is the Department's top priority and a major risk management need for the City.**

DOD is proposing that funds that were held in the Unappropriated Balance for this purpose during the current fiscal year should now be used to procure a contractor to provide Lead Access Specialist services. The original figure of \$81,989 was based on the cost of one Building Inspector at 75% FTE. It can be found in last year's Budget and Finance Committee Report (CF# 18-0600) ... *"nine-months funding for one Building Inspector (\$81,989 direct cost) to function as a Certified Access Specialist."* We reviewed the job descriptions, responsibilities, and salaries for personnel at the

Bureau of Engineering, Department of Building and Safety, and contract-based positions at LAWA. The figure of \$119,985 is based on the equivalent hours of a 100% FTE for substantially similar expertise.

2. Expansion of the HIV & Homelessness Pilot Program (\$60,695) This request is an expansion of services that DOD was funded for this current fiscal year in response to the Mayor's January 2017 request at CENTCOM for the AIDS Coordinator's Office (ACO) to extend the syringe exchange program in support of the City's plan to end homelessness.

The ACO secured \$30,000 FY 2018-19 to include new modalities consisting of outreach into homeless encampments and backpack syringe exchange. The allocation allowed us to provide an additional \$5,000 to each of our contracted providers, who to date have been able to reach 1,000 homeless individuals and collect an additional 40,000 syringes on top of the work done through the regular program. These preventative services are not limited to those with HIV.

This program needs to scale up to meet demand and reduce the number of syringes found in streets and parks. These funds will provide agencies with resources to defray costs for syringe recycling and staff time. The ACO will use innovative delivery methods, integrate into the Unified Homeless Response Center (UHRC) teams, reach out and educate in encampments, and expand hours and sites where exchanges are available. We anticipate being able to at least double both the number of syringes we collect and individuals we serve through this targeted program over the next 3 years.

3. Staff Development Training and Related Travel (\$20,000). \$20,000 is requested to support continuing staff development and training. Given the role of DOD regarding compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and targeted services to meet the specific needs of people with disabilities; an exceedingly high level of expertise is required of the Department's staff. Ongoing training and development is vital in advising the City on evolving ADA rules while minimizing exposure to risk for the City. Being able to provide accurate and up-to-date ADA related information to departments is necessary in order to comply with the ADA and related laws, and to reduce the number of ADA-related lawsuits the City receives in any given year. Training resources have included: updates on federal law and best practices at the National Association of ADA Coordinators; improving our §508 response through assistive technology conferences; assisting in developing policy and standards for Los Angeles' Text to 911 program; and the National Council on Independent Living conference, one of the nation's largest disability policy conferences.

4. Census Outreach (\$10,000). This budget request supports the 2020 Census Initiative as mandated by Mayoral Executive Directive 21. DOD will utilize these funds to ensure that Census efforts are in compliance with the ADA. This line item will cover the costs of converting printed materials into alternate formats like large print, Braille, audio, and 508 accessible digital copies/e-versions to support Census Action Kiosks (CAK) at 10 community-based organizations that serve people with disabilities. Further, it will provide technical assistance in the development of the Social Media Kit, development of Public Service Announcements, and their conversion to accessible multimedia.

5. Section 508 Online Training Platform and Remediation (additional \$15,000). The ADA's incorporation of the Rehabilitation Act §508 requires that all City electronic publicly-distributed documents such as agendas, notices, flyers, as well as existing City documents be accessible so that assistive technology, such as a screen reader, can be used to "view" these documents. **This area of accessibility compliance is increasingly the City's most vulnerable.**

For FY 2017-18, DOD expended under \$1,000 for remediation services. In the current fiscal year, DOD will exhaust the \$12,500 apportioned funds to provide document remediation before year's end. Demand will continue to grow at an exponential rate, as more departments and the public become fully informed about the mandate to properly formulate or remediate all digital documents for public distribution. This includes everything from the Sustainability pLAN, to the Mayor's Executive Directives, to Controller Audits, to training and technical materials required by various settlements and other legal mandates. The Department is requesting an additional \$15,000 to meet the anticipated increase in demand.

6. Community Program Assistant II (\$5,596). The Department is grateful for the inclusion of this position in the Mayor's proposed budget. However, limiting the classification at paygrade I is inconsistent with the duties of the position and the work needing to be performed. The key distinguishing factors between paygrade I and II are the duties to conduct client outreach, handle a more difficult case load, and direct volunteers. All of which are central to supporting the UHRC as DOD takes a more active role in visiting encampments and providing direct services that meet the unique needs of homeless people with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration of our budget requests. The Department stands ready to continue providing the higher quality of service expected throughout the City to reduce accessibility-related risk for all City services, programs and facilities. If we can provide additional information or answer any questions, please feel free to contact me at (213) 202-2764.

Sincerely,



Stephen David Simon
Executive Director

c: Barbara Romero, Deputy Mayor, City Services
Ashley Stracke, Neighborhood Services Director, Mayor's Office
Andy Chen, Analyst, City Administrative Office