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DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY

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April 23, 2018

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

Dear Councilmember Krekorian:

PROPOSED BUDGET FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2018-19

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding our proposed Department on Disability (DOD) budget for FY 2018-19. We appreciate the support of the Council as well as the efforts of the Mayor's Office, 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. This year we worked particularly closely with the Mayor's Budget Team to consider the longer term impact of resource allocation and structural changes necessary for DOD to accomplish its citywide accessibility mandate.

While many of our core functions are supported in the Mayor's Proposed Budget, there are several important requests that need your attention, especially in light of the findings in the Controller's audit of the Department, "...calling for a more systematic, citywide approach to enhance the Department's effectiveness and improve the City's compliance with disability laws:"

1. **CASp Position (\$81,989).** A Certified Access Specialist is now, more than ever, a legally necessary role at DOD given the significant lawsuits regarding accessibility, the required work in creating and implementing the Council's mandated Self-Evaluation/Transition Plan, and in bringing the City's physical locations into full alignment with the ADA and other disability laws. Currently, we have one person in DOD that provides this specialized technical assistance. However, under the *Willits* settlement, he is assigned to spend half of his time on the Sidewalk Repair Program and related infrastructure issues. In addition, the audit asked DOD to take a bigger role in Self-Evaluation/Transition Plan process, as well as providing increased technical assistance regarding physical accessibility. The citywide work concerning the Self-Evaluation/Transition Plan requires substantially more than one half-time person. We are conservatively classifying this position at

the Senior Building Inspector level. **DOD needs this position in order to fulfill the requirements related to the Transition Plan (\$81,989).**

2. **Full Position Funding for MA Position (\$41,053).** This position has already been included in the Mayor's Proposed Budget though it is funded for six months. DOD believes that it is prudent that the City fund this new position for twelve months. Because of the critical need for this position to assist our risk management functions consistent with the audit, we ask for a full year's funding. **Therefore, we are asking for additional funding for this position (\$41,053).**
3. **Case Management System (\$28,000).** This Controller's audit of DOD emphasized the dire need of a case management system for our Department. As a department that is founded on service and technical assistance, a case management system is a basic necessity. We are currently functioning by tracking what we can on a series of documents on the Google Drive and generating our metrics through self-reporting. This, as the audit highlighted, is less than ideal. DOD is completely flexible about the source of the program. So, whether it is a program developed by ITA or a customized off the shelf product, as long as DOD meets its commitment to have one in place, with all employees trained, and the program fully functional by January 1st 2019, we are satisfied. **Based on the recommendation from the audit and a previously identified need, DOD requests case management software and support (\$28,000).**
4. **Printing Costs (\$18,000).** Every year DOD prints its Emergency Preparedness Manual for People with Disabilities. The cost of binding and printing these manuals as well as the alternatively formatted manuals in braille, large print, and digital formats has been consistently underfunded. These emergency preparedness manuals are a vital tool to provide a voice for a "whole community" approach to Emergency Management as the *CALIF* lawsuit requires, and cannot be replaced by digital versions for many people with disabilities who won't have access to an accessible computer or power. **DOD needs to have hard copies and alternative format copies of its Emergency Preparedness Manual and other materials for People with Disabilities (\$18,000).**
5. **Senior Accountant I Position (\$91,392).**¹ The Department had its Senior Accountant I (1523-1) position eliminated in the FY 2010-11 budget, as the City reduced expenses in the face of the great recession. However, the elimination forced DOD to experiment with whether the Senior MA I could reasonably carry out existing duties as well as those of a Senior Accountant. This combining of roles has proven not to be feasible or productive, and the Controller's audit noted the need to improve DOD's operational effectiveness, reassessing contracting and administrative functions. Additionally, the recent implementation of FMS 2.0, which now incorporates the procurement of goods, will demand a higher level of expertise and even more monitoring, which causes a strain on a smaller department which currently has only one accounting clerk. **DOD is requesting to have a Senior Accountant I position reinstated (\$91,392).**

¹ Current pay for Senior Accountant I (1523-1) is \$91,391.76 at Step 15, which is the likely step if we are projecting transfers from other departments.

6. **Staff Development Training and Related Travel (\$20,000)**. We are once again requesting \$20,000 to support continuing staff development and training. Ongoing training and development is vital in fulfilling our technical assistance mandate to advise the City on evolving ADA and related laws while minimizing exposure to risk for the City. The foundation of this Department includes highly technical areas of expertise that are constantly being revamped, re-interpreted, or updated. We provide over two thousand instances of “technical assistance” every year. Being able to provide accurate and up-to-date 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. **Given the role of DOD regarding compliance, 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 and constant training is necessary in many areas (\$20,000).**

Training resource examples include:

- The National Association of ADA Coordinators (\$6,733 for two employees to attend)
- Pacific ADA Update Conference (\$675 for three employees).
- 33rd CSUN Assistive Technology Conference (\$1,870 for one employee).
- California Department of State Architect’s (DSA) Training Academy (\$1,070)

7. **Supplemental Budget Request – AIDS Coordinator’s Office (\$30,000)²**

Since January 2018, the ACO has been working with the Mayor’s CENTCOM team to further the city’s efforts to engage the homeless population and connect them to services. When going through encampments they discovered large quantities of discarded syringes that pose a risk to the homeless individuals themselves, individuals that work with them, and the general public. The ACO’s syringe exchange program was retained to start outreach and engagement, syringe collection and disposal, overdose prevention education, and other harm reduction activities. The program currently has six providers at seventeen sites for a cost of \$450,000.

- The first new site that was identified for integrated outreach and engagement at the homeless encampment was **El Pueblo**. Permanent collection bins were installed at three locations at the site and Bienestar Human Services came in to provide syringe exchange services and outreach every Wednesday evening beginning in February 2018.
- The second new site that was identified was the ReFresh Spot in **Skid Row**. The ACO identified Homeless Healthcare Los Angeles as the partner that will provide a modified version of syringe exchange onsite. The site has been in transition so syringe exchange services have not begun.

² The first cases of HIV were discovered in the city of Los Angeles in 1981. In an effort to acknowledge and to create an impact against the scourge of HIV, the City established the AIDS Coordinator’s Office (ACO) in 1989 to develop policies, initiatives, education, and prevention services that target populations at greatest risk for acquiring or transmitting HIV.

- Syringe collection and disposal programs remove approximately **one million** used syringes from the streets every year
- Engages **8,800** clients in harm reduction sessions aimed at getting them into drug treatment, detox or other services; **700** of those individuals were veterans.
- HIV testing providers tested approximately **30,000** individuals.
- Prevention and education providers served **2,400** individuals
- All programs cumulatively supported **38** full time equivalent jobs for the past three years.

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- A third new location, which is still in the planning stages will be in **Hollywood**. As soon as a site is identified, we will engage a partner to open a new syringe exchange location.
- As a fourth new location, we have identified the need to expand into **South Park** due to a large increase in discarded syringes. The ACO will work with Asian American Drug Abuse Program, our local provider partner so lay out a strategy for proceeding with cleanup of the park.

All the provider partners we have engaged, or will engage, are current syringe exchange providers for the city with a full complement of locations; so expanding the program would require enhanced staffing and resources for supplies. **The ACO is seeking \$30,000 in supplemental funding to cover provider expenses as we expand syringe collection and disposal sites in conjunction with the Mayor's CENTCOM team and the City's homelessness reduction efforts.**

Thank you for your consideration of our budget requests. The Department stands ready to continue providing the highest 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
Jane Chung, Mayor's Office
Andy Chen, City Administrative Office