

April 22, 2020

Chair David Ryu and Members of the Health, Education, Neighborhoods, Parks, Arts, and River Committee

Los Angeles City Council

200 N. Spring Street, Room 1060

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Via email: Eric.Villanueva@lacity.org

**RE: [CF # 20-0190](#) – Armed While On Duty / Park Rangers / Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) / Section 63.41 / Amendment**

Dear Chairman Ryu and Members of the Health, Education, Neighborhoods, Parks, Arts, and River Committee:

First, we recognize that the City of Los Angeles and its Councilmembers are working diligently to address the disastrous impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the city and its hardest-hit residents. As the city grapples with our homelessness and public health crises, it is increasingly important that the city invests in critical public health services and maintains that the park rangers serving the parks remain unarmed. We thank you for your leadership in responding to the crisis and the immediate needs of our most vulnerable populations, and urge you to consider our position and recommendations once the Council is able to return to regular meetings.

**The signing organizations strongly oppose any attempt to arm the City of Los Angeles park rangers and encourage the City Council to invest in alternative approaches to ensure community safety at parks such as increased programming, jobs and design improvements.** We support the health and safety of our park rangers, city staff, and park users and recognize that our city's parks are an essential source of physical activity, recreation, and community space for many Angelenos, including families, children, and older adults.

Because of our city's spatial patterns of racist land use and historic disinvestment in communities of color, many Angelenos face barriers in accessing high-quality and safe parks. For park-poor communities, these sites often become the only space residents can create community and find respite in times of stress. In a city where racial profiling and fatal interactions by law enforcement agencies are well-documented, and where a staggering \$4.1 million was allocated in this year's budget for firearms, ammunitions, and other devices, we are alarmed at our City leadership's latest turn towards weaponizing park rangers and contributing to the presence of guns in our city and the criminalization of our low-income communities of color.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> City of Los Angeles FY 19-20 Budget; A Los Angeles Times analysis found that in Los Angeles from 2014 to 2016, 32% of pedestrians stopped and 26% of drivers stopped were Black even though Black residents make up only 10% of the city's population.

In addition, the COVID-19 global pandemic that has forced the city to declare a state of emergency requires the City Council to make dedicated efforts to protect the most vulnerable members of our city from contracting the virus, including and especially unhoused Angelenos. In many areas, parks and recreation centers have now been designated as safe shelters for unhoused Angelenos. As the city grapples with our homelessness and public health crises, it is increasingly important that the city invests in critical public health services and maintains that the park rangers serving the parks remain unarmed. We encourage the City to instead invest resources to train rangers in conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies to ensure true community health and safety throughout our city's park system.

We look forward to working with this Committee to create a vision for accessible, safe, and quality parks staffed by unarmed personnel and dedicated to ensuring community safety for our most vulnerable park users. Please contact Anisha Hingorani [ahingorani@advanceproj.org](mailto:ahingorani@advanceproj.org) for any questions.

Sincerely,

Andres Kwon  
**ACLU Southern California**

Maria Brenes  
InnerCity Struggle

Anisha Hingorani  
**Advancement Project California**

Tori Kjer  
**LA Neighborhood Land Trust**

Kyle Tsukahira  
**Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement**

Reverend Zachary Hoover  
**LA Voice**

Marcos Trinidad  
**Audubon Debs Park**

Eric Mann  
**Labor/Community Strategy Center**

Charisse Bremond Weaver  
**Brotherhood Crusade**

Grace Cotangco  
**National Health Foundation**

Shimica Gaskins  
**Children's Defense Fund-California**

Damon Nagami  
**Natural Resources Defense Council**

Dilia Ortega and Sylvia Arredondo  
**Communities for a Better Environment**

Andres Ramirez  
**Pacoima Beautiful**

Alberto Retana  
**Community Coalition**

Francisco Romero  
**Promesa Boyle Heights**

Viviana Franco  
**From Lot to Spot**

Max Arias  
**SEIU Local 99**

April Verett  
**SEIU Local 2015**

Sissy Trinh  
**Southeast Asian Community Alliance**

Pastor William D. Smart Jr.  
**Southern Christian Leadership Conference**  
**-Southern California**

Elizeth Virrueta-Ortiz  
**STOP Coalition CA**

Robin Mark  
**The Trust for Public Land**

Yvette Lopez-Ledesma  
**The Wilderness Society**