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STEPHEN DAVID SIMON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 24, 2020

The Honorable Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair
Budget and Finance Committee
Attention: Mandy Morales
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmember Krekorian:

PROPOSED BUDGET FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2020-21

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the proposed Department on Disability (DOD) budget for FY 2020-21. As Mayor Garcetti noted in a COVID-19 briefing last week, 26 percent of people with disabilities in our county live in poverty, and more than 40 percent live in households that are food insecure. These numbers are but a small representation of the indicators showing that people with disabilities are among the most vulnerable populations in our City. The COVID-19 pandemic and prolonged Level 1 Emergency Operations Center activation have served to highlight the importance of ensuring accessibility in all City services, programs and facilities.

We applaud the vision of the Mayor's Office, the CAO, and CLA in developing a proposed budget that provides resources critical to serving the needs of people with disabilities, remains vigilant on the HIV epidemic, and ensures the City's compliance with the mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other disability laws.

In light of the City budget outlook resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we concur with the FY2020-21 budget recommendations proposed by the Mayor, but for one item that will address gaps in accessible communications citywide and have a major impact on risk management for the City. We appreciate your consideration of the following:

ADA/Rehabilitation Act §508 Specialist (\$67,109).

This is the Department's top priority and a major risk management need for the City.

Under the ADA, the City is required to ensure that all City digital content is accessible – including websites and documents posted to them – to people with disabilities, as delineated under §508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The CALIF v. Los Angeles emergency preparedness settlement reaffirmed this requirement. As City departments become increasingly dependent on web-based solutions for

both personnel and public facing functions, there are significant risk management issues posed by the City's current level of compliance with this mandate.

DOD is currently staffed with one §508 Specialist position to:

1. Provide training to key City employees from each department who are responsible for the public dissemination of digital content;
2. Remediate documents (reports, manuals, training, materials, newsletters, etc. citywide) for City department websites or emails that are inaccessible;
3. Address systemic changes in digital accessibility throughout the City, including: emergency notification messaging; Video Remote Interpreting at temporary shelters, testing sites, and medical facilities; online training for employees; Zoom accessibility for public and employee meetings; and launching the electronic survey of the City's ADA Transition Plan.
4. Provide usability testing as needed (to ensure people with disabilities can navigate programs) for websites, apps, and digital services provided by City departments.
5. Establish a §508 Remediation Team & Compliance Resource Center in collaboration with ITA to expand protocols for remediating high-profile projects/reports/plans generated by the Mayor's Office, City Council, and other City departments.
6. Expand the Department's Web Accessibility Resource Intranet and move toward an online training platform to ensure each department retains staff updated on §508 requirements.

We are requesting an exempt position to allow DOD the flexibility to recruit and select the best-qualified candidate who possesses the necessary technical experience and expertise for the position. We have in the past tried to use civil service staff in this position without success.

Thank you for your consideration of this sole request. 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 as we transition into a post-COVID-19 new normal. 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
Daniela Cuevas, Analyst, City Administrative Office