Communication from Public

Name: Anisha Hingorani
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Council File No: 20-0190
Comments for Public Posting: To the members of the Health, Education, Neighborhoods, Parks, Arts, And River Committee and members of the City Council: Please see attached for a letter signed by 24 park equity, youth and racial justice groups urging the Los Angeles City Council to stop efforts to arm park rangers. The motion CF# 20-0190 raises serious racial and economic equity concerns and we urge City leaders to divest from policing in order and instead invest in the public health, well-being, and safety of vulnerable park users. The signing organizations look forward to working with you to address this issue. Please reach out if you have any further questions.
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.¹

¹ 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 for any questions.

Sincerely,

Andres Kwon
ACLU Southern California

Anisha Hingorani
Advancement Project California

Kyle Tsukahira
Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement

Marcos Trinidad
Audubon Debs Park

Charisse Bremond Weaver
Brotherhood Crusade

Shimica Gaskins
Children's Defense Fund-California

Dilia Ortega and Sylvia Arredondo
Communities for a Better Environment

Alberto Retana
Community Coalition

Viviana Franco
From Lot to Spot

Maria Brenes
InnerCity Struggle

Tori Kjer
LA Neighborhood Land Trust

Reverend Zachary Hoover
LA Voice

Eric Mann
Labor/Community Strategy Center

Grace Cotangco
National Health Foundation

Damon Nagami
Natural Resources Defense Council

Andres Ramirez
Pacoima Beautiful

Francisco Romero
Promesa Boyle Heights

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