REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: March 7, 2023

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No: 23-0002-S21
Assignment No: 23-02-0073

SUBJECT: Resolution (Raman – Blumenfield) to support Funding for the California Policy Lab

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached Resolution (Raman – Blumenfield) to include in the 2023-2024 State Legislative Program support for legislative or administrative action for the State to provide the California Policy Lab with $9 million in funding to augment research into issues such as homelessness, economic inequality, criminal justice reform, and education inequality.

SUMMARY

Resolution (Raman – Blumenfield), introduced January 11, 2023, advises that the California Policy Lab (CPL), established at the University of California in 2017 through philanthropic seed funding and support from the City of Los Angeles, helps state and local government agencies to improve public policy and programs through data analysis and research. CPL received a seed grant that ended in December of 2022. Thus, the program is in need of an appropriation to ensure its continued work in support of California's governmental agencies.

The Resolution further advises that CPL requests $3 million annually for three years, totaling $9 million, from the State to support their core operations and infrastructure to support continued research and data analysis. The Resolution also notes that CPL's research and partnership has been integral to the City of Los Angeles's own development of policies to end homelessness, as well as other priority issues. Therefore, it is in the City's interest to support the continuation of the CPL's work.

The Resolution recommends that the City support California Policy Lab's funding request of $9 million to the State Legislative Program so that the CPL may continue to innovate solutions to pressing issues such as homelessness, economic inequality, criminal justice reform, and education inequality.

BACKGROUND

The California Policy Lab is the State's premier policy-focused research and analytic center. In partnership with more than 40 state and local government agencies in California, the CPL produces data-driven research into education, criminal justice reform, poverty and the social safety net, labor and employment, health, and homelessness and high needs populations. Launched in 2017 with philanthropic seed funding and support from the City of Los Angeles, the CPL serves as a bridge between local and state government and researchers at the country's top public universities. Though state and local governments are often at the forefront of policy innovation, they often lack the resources, data infrastructure, and rigorous research expertise to evaluate substantial data about their programs and constituents. The CPL couples government needs and data with the research capabilities of top experts to generate problem-solving, empirically driven policy analysis.

Of the CPL's six areas of research concentration, several focus on issues highly important to the Council's current agenda, including homelessness. According to the CPL, more than one-third of people experiencing homelessness in the United States live in California, despite the state maintaining only 12% of the country's overall population. The CPL partners with State and local agencies to develop and evaluate evidence-based solutions using data integration, predictive analytics, screening tools, and program evaluation to improve outcomes for currently unhoused individuals and families. In 2021, the CPL launched is Homelessness Prevention Community Advisory Board to ensure that research direction meets community needs. Furthermore, the CPL has focused heavily on homelessness in Los Angeles County, including projects evaluating the effectiveness of LA County Homelessness Prevention Services, the LA County Prevention Targeting Tool, and the LA County Homelessness Prevention Unit.

The City Council has also previously supported the CPL's research efforts to evaluate the impact of minimum wage on Angelenos. In 2016, the Council moved to enter into a data sharing agreement with the CPL at the University of California, Los Angeles so that the CPL could interpret and analyze City data to study the effects of the minimum wage on quality of life, small business and employer behavior, and job growth. This research is critical to making informed policy decisions for the City.

Support for the CPL would be consistent with City efforts to identify data-driven solutions to address pressing social issues such as homelessness and economic inequality.

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Analyst