May 3, 2021

The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell  
Supervisory District 2  
866 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

American Rescue Plan Funds to Address Public Health Crisis – Community Violence

Dear Supervisor Mitchell,

Congratulations on your win to lead the Second District. We appreciate your recent convenings to develop a virtual roadmap with community leaders and organizations to help shape District 2 priorities for American Rescue Fund Act (ARPA) funds. The Los Angeles Violence Intervention Coalition (LAVIC) asks that we partner to uplift the work of Intervention in impacted communities to broaden community-based public safety efforts. The LAVIC is comprised of 16 gang intervention agencies and groups that service the city and county focused on ending the gun homicide epidemic in the LA region.

The White House is developing a document to provide maximum guidance and maximum flexibility to ensure stimulus resources reach the communities most impacted by three public health crises—COVID-19 pandemic, gun violence, and American racism. On March 31st, the Biden Administration released its American Jobs Plan which included a “$5 billion investment over eight years in support of evidence-based community violence intervention programs. President Biden is calling on Congress to invest in job training for formerly incarcerated individuals and justice-involved youth and in improving public safety.” Public officials are encouraged to use portions of these dollars to support violence prevention efforts to stem the national surge in gun violence and develop a community-based workforce. These actions will help the County not only realize its’ vision for safety in communities of color but set the tone for how the nation can reimagine public safety.

As you are aware, shootings and homicides rose significantly last year and 2021 began with high rates of shootings and killings which have not been seen in Los Angeles for over a decade. Gang intervention has stretched far beyond their primary violence prevention role to provide public health information and PPE to residents in viral hotspots, provide support for distribution of Angeleno cards, and distribute food to families in desperate need. Intervention workers have lost their lives, dealt with severe illness due to COVID-19, and put their families at risk in service to the LA region. A recent LA Times Op-Ed calls for more investment in peacemakers given the national surge in community violence recognizing the call for support from the White House for community-based violence intervention programs.¹

Evaluation of Effectiveness

The Los Angeles comprehensive public safety strategy has been one of the largest investments in non-traditional, community-centered approaches in the nation for over a decade. The LA County Office of Violence

¹ LA Times Op-Ed: Homicide rates are up. To bring them down, empower homegrown peacekeepers; April 12, 2021
Prevention (OVP) was established by the Board of Supervisors in February 2019 to provide a multi-sector, health-oriented response to multiple forms of violence in the County. Through the Trauma Prevention Initiative (TPI), launched in 2015 to create a comprehensive, place-based approach through programs, policies and partnerships, OVP has invested $6.5 million a year in administration and support for community violence intervention in unincorporated county areas.

Recent data released by the LA Mayor’s Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) has demonstrated a 41.2% reduction in gang-related retaliatory homicides and aggravated assaults in the South Los Angeles study region from 2014-2017 due to community-based violence intervention efforts. These reductions have generated an estimated savings in criminal justice costs of approximately $55 million per year (in 2018 dollars). An evaluation of gang intervention in Los Angeles found that when LAPD alone responds to a gang-related homicide, the likelihood of a retaliatory assault or homicide is 46% and 26% respectively. When LAPD and gang intervention respond to the scene from their respective lane the percentages drop down to 10% and below 1% respectively.

Gang intervention agencies and workers have made tremendous efforts to ensure public safety, through the development of professional understandings with law enforcement to lower potential violence. From 2010 to 2019, the homicide rate in the City of LA has remained below 300 which aligns with the launch of the city’s comprehensive violence reduction strategy in 2008. Compared to a devastating 1,092 homicides in 1992. These efforts have saved the City millions of dollars over a 12-year period. On December 31, 2019, Chief Moore credited the city’s low crime numbers to gang intervention and work with the GRYD office.

Los Angeles Leads the Nation

Los Angeles has led the country in building a sustainable comprehensive violence reduction strategy like nowhere else. Gang intervention has a demonstrated track record of saving lives and unnecessary costs associated with the criminal justice system including closing many of the on ramps to gang membership. As the country reimagines what a broader, more comprehensive public safety system looks like, we believe Los Angeles County can be the national leader forging a new path.

The undersigned reflect the multiple gang intervention agencies and groups serving the County and City to ensure safety and health during these challenging times. We have a growing list of local, statewide, and national supporters who have signed on to our campaign. We request increased investment in the amount of $250 million over three years, for the following:

1. **Salary Adjustment & Hero Pay for Intervention Workers**: Los Angeles intervention workers have not received significant pay raises nor cost of living increases in recognition of our work. Gang intervention workers provide support 24 hours a day shouldering a high level of risk and stress yet have not received the appropriate compensation over the last decade. Therefore, we call for a salary adjustment requiring a minimum annual salary of $45,000 plus benefits for gang intervention workers including “hero pay”, a 25% increase. Currently, workers are making just above living wage yet are exposed to high rates of stress, trauma, and death daily while working to deescalate neighborhood conflicts. Hero (hazard) pay means additional pay for performing hazardous duty or work that causes

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3 Ibid, 6.
5 https://www.lapdonline.org/statistical_data
extreme physical discomfort and distress which is not adequately alleviated by protective devices and is deemed to impose a physical hardship. Therefore, like other essential workers in the city, we call for hero pay in recognition of our dangerous work.

2. **The County Needs Additional Intervention Workers & Peace Ambassadors:** Intervention agencies need to hire additional support to further decrease violence and increase public safety which requires a significantly larger workforce that is not reliant on law enforcement alone. Additionally, intervention workers have a significant role in providing hospital-based and school-based services throughout the city. As L.A. schools end reliance on School Resource Officers, intervention workers can fill that role to ensure community-led school safety on and off campus. Therefore, we call for increasing the workforce from 12 to 500 intervention workers and from 6 to 250 peace ambassadors to reinforce the role of trusted community leaders of color in achieving increased public safety.

3. **Agencies Need Funding for Access to Unrestricted & Rapid Response Funds:** Flexible funds to address and support community needs are crucial for intervention agencies. Intervention workers frequently encounter delays in receiving appropriate resources to offer support to clients and many times pay out of their own pockets to support program participants. Small stipends should be provided to enrolled participants to provide some incentive for services and financial relief. Therefore, we call for access to a pot of flexible funds to rapidly respond to urgent community needs. Additionally, consider providing block grants to advocacy organizations to support and distribute smaller scale funds directly to agencies or via foundation partnerships.

4. **Agencies Need Funding for Supportive Services for Intervention & Sustainable Community Resources:** Intervention workers have increased risk and trauma exposure given the nature of their work. We call for investment in specific counseling and psychological services for peacemakers to support and sustain ourselves in this vital work. Additionally, intervention agencies lack adequate funding to effectively engage the broader community to address economic needs. We call for increased investment in workforce development (career/job training) services for the larger community.

5. **Funding to Enhance Programming & Capacity Building for Intervention Agencies:** Intervention agencies need to hire case managers, therapists and clinicians to support participants and families. Funds should be made available for agencies to directly help families with victim services, mental health, and financial needs. Investment in the development and capacity-building of agencies will help to increase effectiveness of service delivery. Specific funds should be made available through foundation partnerships or block grants to intermediary organizations.

6. **Creation of a Public/Private Partnership:** Given the role of the Office of Violence Prevention in the County to administer funds directly community-based intervention organizations and work to lead violence reduction and non-law enforcement safety strategies, we call for increased investment in the OVP infrastructure to support and oversee the bolstering of public safety efforts. We ask that OVP continue to provide the necessary core operational support to intervention agencies. Additionally, we would like to identify an intermediary agency and/or private foundation to disburse flexible funds for additional supportive services and incentives, capacity-building, financial relief, PPE, and development of sustainable community resources.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to increase funding of the County’s community violence intervention workforce and community-based public safety efforts, to show the nation what is possible when
we make investments in violence prevention a fundamental and essential priority. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Fernando Rejón, Executive Director  
Urban Peace Institute (UPI)

Skipp Townsend, Executive Director  
2nd Call

Kevin “Twin” Orange, Director  
Advocates for Peace & Urban Unity (APUU)

Michelle Fuentes-Miranda, President and Founder  
Alliance for Community Empowerment

Daniel Mejía, Executive Director  
Breaking Through Barriers To Success (BTBTS)

William “Blinky” Rodriguez, Executive Director  
Champions In Service (CIS)

Jerald “Pee” Cavitt, Executive Director  
Chapter TWO Community Intervention (Ch.2)

Ben “Taco” Owens, Executive Director/President  
Detours Mentoring Group  
Southern California Ceasefire Committee

Ansar Muhammad, Executive Director  
HELPER Foundation

Reynaldo Reaser, Executive Director  
Reclaiming America’s Communities through Empowerment (RACE)

Michael Guedel, Executive Director  
Resilient Agency

Nathan Arias, President/CEO  
Soledad Enrichment Action (SEA)

Joe Gallardo, Interim Executive Director  
Southern California Crossroads

Darlene Kiyan, Executive Director  
Toberman Neighborhood Center
Bob Pratt, President
Volunteers of America Los Angeles

Allies & Supporters

Advance Peace, Khaalid Muttaqi, Chief Operating Officer
Advancement Project, John Kim, Executive Director
Arts for Healing and Justice Network, Zoe Rawson, Director of Youth and Community Justice
Community Coalition, Alberto Retana, President/CEO
Everytown for Gun Safety, Laura Abbasi, Organizing Manager
Giffords Law Center for Gun Safety, Paul Carrillo, Director Community Violence Initiative
Healing Dialogue and Action, Javier Stauring, Executive Director
Homeboy Industries, Fabian Garcia, Director of Government Relations
HOPE Culture- Inland Empire & Chicago, Richard Analis Jr., Executive Director
Innovation Bridge, Bel Reyes, Executive Director
Latino Coalition for Community Leadership, Richard R. Ramos, Executive Director
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
Operation New Hope, Russell Degnan, CEO
Parents on a Mission, Richard R. Ramos, CEO and Founder
People's Budget Orange County, Karen G. Hernández, Chairperson and Lead Organizer
Social Justice Learning Institute, Derek Steele, Interim Executive Director
Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
The Miranda-Castro Foundation, David Miranda, Director
United Parents and Students, Veronica Toledo, Associate Director
Watts Gang Task Force Council, Deborah Riddle, Board Secretary
Women Against Gun Violence, Margot Bennett, Executive Director
Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy, Terrance Stone, CEO
Youth ALIVE!, Anne Marks, Executive Director
Youth Justice Education Clinic Vivian Wong, Staff Attorney and Adjunct Professor

Cc:
John Mathews, Justice Deputy, SD2