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Rescind Office of Latino Affairs budget cuts

Resolved, ANC 1D advises the DC Council and the Mayor to restore all the cuts proposed in the FY11 budget of the Office of Latino Affairs (OLA).

Why:

A. DC Latinos, a large and often neglected population, deserve affirmative action by DC agencies to assure equitable delivery of services.

A.1 Latinos represent a large and growing sector of DC's population, and according to the last census, the plurality of residents of the ANC 1D area.

A.2 Recent surveys in 1D's area indicate that the rate of Latino public participation in DC government evaluations of needs is many times lower than other main DC population groups. For example, despite strong outreach efforts and provision of interpreter services, a relatively small proportion of our Latino neighbors participate in ANC and civic group discussions and processes for policy formation.

A.3 Recent surveys and reports in the 1D area indicate that the delivery of DC agency services is strongly and inequitably less to our Latino neighbors. Some examples:

A.3a. The rate of assaults on young Latino men seems many times greater than the Metropolitan Police Department's estimates.

A.3b. The rate of the public health menace of bed bugs has reached epidemic proportions in 1D's area without apposite responses. Perhaps half of 1D's people live in buildings so infested, and these buildings shelter large Latino populations. Other possible epidemics need measurement and addressing with specific responses.

A.3c. The risk of exposure to dangerous and oppressive conditions in Latino dwellings. Specifically, their exposure to fire hazards is much greater than international standards. The recent fire in the Deauville apartment building quickly spread to the building in back, resulting in what was originally three structures all destroyed. The preponderance of 1D's population lives in apartment buildings, with most of them lacking modern fire-safety features, and most without clear fire-safety or fire-fighting plans.

A.3d. Latinos' access to public parks and recreation facilities is limited by inefficient programs that do not take responsibility for knowing and meeting needs. Many parents complain that one major extinction of a DPR program which had served thousands of youth seem to trigger their kids to turn to gangs for recreation. The largest and most used facility, across 16th Street from 1D, was heavily used by Latinos, but was taken out of service with soccer facilities replaced by tennis courts.

Similar facilities, including a small swimming pool, that serve Latinos - our largest population of youth - were never replaced.

A.3e. Library facilities of great cost were designed without a needs assessment or consideration of alternatives that could more efficiently meet the needs of this underserved group.

A.3f. National surveys of the effectiveness of social-service programs show that, across the country, the efficiency of delivery of services with measurable benefits easily varies by a factor of ten for the same resource expenditure. Anecdotally, ANC 1D hears that a similar range of effectiveness holds for DC government-funded agencies that provide service. Some say there are three hundred of such providers here. Again anecdotally, neighbors tell us that there are no reliable guides to assembling services to meet their needs. There is no "users guide" that lists, explains, and evaluates service providers. There are no effective evaluations so that the most effective and innovative providers can expand their offerings and outreach.

B. From the above indicators, it appears that solutions to many of the problems faced by our Latino neighbors must include an energetic adopting of better practices for program management. Such a program could encourage adoption of innovations that could improve the impact of programs by as much as a factor of ten with the same resources.

B.1 OLA should be encouraged, and given the resources, to build pilot programs to address the kinds of problems listed above.

B.1a. A pilot program leveraging the social capital of ANCs and the volunteers of local civic networks, if chosen carefully and monitored for outstanding results, could greatly improve OLA's impact.

B.1b. OLA has already begun, and should be encouraged to expand its innovations. For example: Mt Pleasant is the beneficiary of assistance and advice from OLA in pilot programs to improve public participation by Latinos in neighborhood programs. ANC1D does not have the budget or expertise to seriously evaluate alternatives it has tried over the years to improve participation. Nor does it have the resources to fulfill at an expert level its legal duty to evaluate government programs, or proposal for policy changes in terms of their impacts on Latinos. 1D does have extensive social networks of volunteers. These networks, with technical assistance from OLA, could synergize with and energize DC agencies to finally and efficiently deliver services to our local Latino population.

C. If the cuts proposed in the budget are allowed to stand, then our slowly built momentum –with many years of full-time equivalent work on the serious issues noted above – will likely be wasted. And, volunteers discouraged.

The budget cuts proposed directly cut services to a population that has been amongst the hardest hit in the current recession. Worse, these cuts will kill efforts to better needed programs at lower cost.

Passed by 4 to 1 vote at the legally noticed, public meeting of ANC1D on April 20, 2010, with a quorum present. Voting "yes": Commissioners Edwards, Scott, Bosserman, McKay. Voting "no": Commissioner Lepanto.