



March 31st, 2021

Attn: Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Cc: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell,
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl,
Supervisor Janice Hahn, &
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

Rescuing LA County's Youth via the American Rescue Plan

Dear LA County Board of Supervisors,

The convergence of the global pandemic, widespread economic uncertainty, and the ensuing clarion call for racial justice has led to a historic and unprecedented moment for righting some of the most persistent and pervasive challenges, including but not limited to: an increasingly fragile safety net, a polarized electorate, trepidation about school reopening, and a far-reaching health crisis. Though the issues are seemingly endless, the moment has also undoubtedly become one of the most important times for decisive and innovative leadership to chart a new path forward for all people, especially the most blameless and vulnerable: our young people. To this end, The Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition and the undersigned organizations urge you to prioritize new investments for young people of color in LA County, particularly in communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The American Rescue Plan funding can be transformative for LA County's youth, especially given your continued leadership in advancing youth development.

The Brothers Sons Selves Coalition (BSS) is a strategic alliance of nine community based organizations across Boyle Heights and the Eastside, South Central, Inglewood, and Long Beach, that work to decriminalize youth in communities of color and end the school-to-prison pipeline. Our organizational partners include InnerCity Struggle, the Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA, the Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network, the Labor Community Strategy Center, Community Coalition, Brotherhood Crusade, the Youth Justice Coalition, Social Justice Learning Institute, and Khmer Girls in Action. Over the last decade, we witnessed state and local officials take bold and important stances alongside community members across various levels of government, including reallocating law enforcement dollars to support Black student





achievement,¹ voting to start youth development departments,² and in your own jurisdiction, empowering voters to support racial justice through initiatives such as Measure J,³ and reimagining youth justice by moving probation dollars to youth development.⁴ While there has been some progress for increasing youth opportunities, structural challenges still work to bar youth of color from fully succeeding. In 2019, the Brothers, Sons, Selves coalition conducted a Safety and Youth Justice survey of 3,378 youth across LA County, concentrating on Supervisorial Districts 1, 2, and 4. Some key findings are as follows:

- Nearly 2 out of 3 youth (65%) believe that encounters with law enforcement escalates conflict and harms communities.
- Black youth accounted for over one-third (37%) of all youth harmed by law enforcement, in spite of being just 18% of our survey respondents.
- 80% of queer and trans youth have little to no access to mental health resources.
- 44% of youth have little to no access to clean, safe, and reliable public transportation.
- Over one out of every five youth had no access to technology (pre-pandemic).
- Youth who have been suspended off campus are 5 times more likely to report being arrested.

These findings confirm the lack of institutional resources and patterns of racial discrimination that our young people experience. The youth have their own solutions to share. In fact, we also learned from our BSS survey that:

- 86% of youth want to see increased investments in after school and community-based programs.
- 90% of youth want to see increased investments in youth and community centers.
- 92% of youth want to see increased investments in youth based jobs and employment.
- 91% of youth want to see increased investments in mental health resources and counselors.
- 50% of youth wanted to see little to no investment in law enforcement (pre pandemic).

¹<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-16/lausd-diverting-school-police-funds-support-black-students>

²https://www.monicarodriguez.org/los_angeles_takes_key_step_in_creating_a_youth_development_department

³<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-11-03/2020-la-election-tracking-measure-j>

⁴<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-11-25/la-county-could-dismantle-juvenile-justice-system-for-care-first-model>





What we always knew is now even more clear - young people need services, care and access to opportunities, not overcriminalization. Through the pandemic, we have continued to engage hundreds of youth through our collective member bases, and we have come to learn that the pandemic has only exacerbated the inequities that have been prevalent in our communities for decades. For too long, we have treated our young people as disposable, and we cannot afford to let the opportunity to support our youth go to waste. We urge The Board of Supervisors to protect our young people by investing in equitable youth development through the American Rescue Plan funding for LA County. Specifically, we are making the following recommendations, with a particular and specific emphasis on youth of color:

1. Allocate \$100 million dollars resources to youth development organizations and municipal departments to support youth with mental health, technology access, and resources for wellness..
2. Allocate \$100 million dollars for initiatives that support youth housing efforts, especially emergency and rapid-rehousing efforts.
3. Allocate \$100 million dollars as emergency cash payments for youth between the ages of 14-25, especially those who are impacted by the juvenile, foster, and criminal justice systems.
4. Allocate \$100 million dollars to support organizations and communities that specifically focus on serving Black youth.
5. Allocate \$100 million dollars to support organizations and initiatives that uplift and support LGBTQ+ youth, especially those from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.
6. Allocate \$100 million dollars to provide free and subsidized public transportation for youth and their families for the duration of LA County's shutdown
7. Allocate \$100 million dollars as funding to seed youth-based jobs and employment opportunities, facilitated through the LA County Youth Commission and the youth development department

In addition to the funds we are requesting, we also would like to assert that no federal funds should be used for punishment in any way - meaning law enforcement, juvenile facilities, probation, or adult jails. We know these are one time funds, and that this federal disbursement is a baseline that will not completely mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on BIPOC youth and communities. However, we encourage the Board of Supervisors to chart a new path forward by equitably funding the futures of LA County youth through this historic opportunity. Young





people in highest need communities require additional support to reach their fullest potential post the devastating pandemic. In short, we urge you to consider the recommendations above informed by LA County youth and focus on rebuilding our communities. Thank you for your consideration and we welcome the opportunity to further discuss these recommendations.

Sincerely,

The Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition and its members:

InnerCity Struggle

East LA Weingart YMCA

Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network

Labor Community Strategy Center

Community Coalition

Brotherhood Crusade

Social Justice Learning Institute

Youth Justice Coalition

Khmer Girls in Action

