



Peace and Justice Commission

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ACTION CALENDAR
APRIL 11, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Peace and Justice Commission

Submitted by: George Lippman, Chairperson, Peace and Justice Commission

Subject: Referral of two health educator positions to the COB FY 2024 budget process

RECOMMENDATION:

Refer to the budget process a request for estimated \$150,000 annually, beginning in FY 2024 or as early as the AAO #2 process in spring 2023, for staffing, materials, and supplies to be able to more broadly and flexibly conduct health education, prevention, and outreach to reduce health disparities, as proposed by the Peace and Justice Commission.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Estimated annual cost: \$150,000. This estimate was given by Dr. Lisa Warhuus, HHCS Director, for staffing, materials, and supplies to be able to more broadly and flexibly conduct health education, prevention, and outreach to reduce health disparities.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS:

According to HHCS Director Dr. Lisa Warhuus, “the overriding health challenge in Berkeley are health disparities....For many years, we have seen significant disparities between the health status of our white community members (generally well above national averages), and our BIPOC community members. Geographically, this shows up with generally excellent health outcomes for people living in the hills, with less ideal outcomes in zip codes in South and West Berkeley (although this is shifting somewhat with gentrification). In recent years, other high-risk populations would include people experiencing homelessness and, to some extent, the LGBTQ+ community (though we need more research on the latter as it can very dependent upon circumstances).

“One of the biggest challenges we have in addressing health disparities is in the communications and outreach (prevention) component of the work. We need to do more culturally responsive outreach to those most negatively impacted by disparities, **engage and listen to what people feel is most needed**, and work with them to fill that gap. In doing so over the years, our Public Health division has often found that what is most missing is trust in the system, information and education done in a culturally responsive way, and clear access points for medical insurance, coverage, and a medical home.

“For instance, in a health assessment conducted by the Public Health Division in 2018, the highest priority identified by Berkeley participants to achieve a healthy community was communities that had access to basic needs and services (i.e. healthcare, housing, healthy food, transportation, etc.), felt connected and was treated with openness, tolerance, and inclusion, and had resources and up to date information on services. “The greatest threats to optimal health that community members identified were high costs of living, food security, and stress/mental wellness with recurring barriers being lack of or limited information and resources available to community members.”

At its regular meeting January 9, 2023, the Peace and Justice Commission adopted the following recommendation proposing the hiring of two health educator positions for the next fiscal year.

M/S/C: Bohn, Jaquin.

Ayes: Lippman, Jacquelin, Bohn, Lee, Morizawa, Gussmann.

Noes: None.

Abstain: Maran.

Absent: Leon-Maldonado.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

N/A

BACKGROUND

Peace and Justice commissioners, along with members of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Community Health Commission, recently met with HHCS Director Dr. Lisa Warhuus and Public Health Manager Janice Chin, at Council’s request, to discuss resources for and obstacles to reproductive health services and education. Dr. Warhuus clarified that “from the lens of HHCS, the work in Berkeley needs to be centered on health disparities in the larger context first,” and to “ensure that our Public Health Division continuously includes Reproductive and Sexual Health (RSH) work as a part of their broader health education, prevention, and outreach strategy.”

HHCS is bringing on a consultant who will organize and engage community members and other stakeholders to create a Community Health Assessment and a Community Health Improvement Plan, including a pilot program to create a health innovation zone to work toward remedying severe health inequities. Performance measures will be tracked through a new web-based population data health platform that will be rolled out as part of this process.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

HHCS would benefit from hiring staff and paying for materials and supplies out of general fund to be able to more broadly and flexibly conduct health education, prevention, and outreach to reduce health disparities.

The department is facing the lack of sufficient resources to do culturally responsive outreach, engagement, and prevention on an unconstrained basis. Engagement of these educators would assist with Reproductive and Sexual Health (RSH) outreach as part of the larger health outreach program.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None

CITY MANAGER

See companion report.

CONTACT PERSON

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