

UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE OF LA COUNTY SUPERVISOR SHEILA KUEHL

Recent Board Motions authored by Supervisor Kuehl

Supporting the "I am Vanessa Guillén" Act of 2020

As many of us know, the heinous murder of Army Specialist Vanessa Guillen at Fort Hood has brought the extremely disturbing issue of sexual assault and sexual harassment to the forefront of the national conversation.

In Congress, two federal bills, HR8270 and S4600, have been introduced to make critical changes in the ways in which sexual assault and harassment cases are handled in the military. Some of these bills' main objectives include making sexual harassment a crime within the Uniform Code of Military Justice and moving prosecution decisions of sexual assault and harassment cases out of the military chain of command. The Board passed a motion by Supervisor Kuehl co-authored with Supervisor Hilda Solis that formalizes the Board of Supervisors support for these bills.

Reentry Employment Support for AB 109 Fire Camp Participants

As we hear about every fire season, California's use of incarcerated people to fight our many wildfires faces criticism for the fact that inmates work in hazardous conditions and receive minimal compensation while incarcerated, and then are faced with serious employment barriers after release. As LA County furthers its anti-racist policy agenda and develops programs to fulfill our Alternatives to Incarceration vision, we have to do more to help those who are willing to risk their lives to fight our wildfires while in jail, so that they are not barred from training and employment as firefighters after they've paid their debt to society.

Thus on the heels of Governor Newsom's signing of Assembly Bill 2147, the Board passed a motion authored by Supervisor Kuehl and Supervisor Hilda Solis that presents both short and long-term visions for improving employment linkages for this population. Fire Camp participants will be connected with meaningful job opportunities and vocational training at the County, and we will prepare a system to help expunge the criminal records of those eligible so that they can apply for their EMT certification and jobs with LACoFD.

Through this motion, LA County will reduce its constant reliance on the labor of incarcerated people by offering the services and support necessary for them to be successfully employed by LA County and LACoFD after release from custody.

Veteran Suicide Review Team

As many of us who have family in the military or who have served themselves know across the US, the veteran suicide rate is more than twice the civilian rate and in California, the rate is even higher.

The alarming number of suicide deaths among our veteran population has led the LA County Board of Supervisors to invest in a peer-based "vet to vet" access initiative known as the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN). We also created a unique partnership between the County, City, and VA to review thousands of suicide deaths in LA County and comb data to identify veterans within the group.

Furthering this vital work, this week, we passed a motion authored by Supervisor Kuehl and co-authored with Supervisor Kathryn Barger that directs the Medical Examiner/ Coroner to create an official partnership for data sharing with the VA. The motion also asks for a report back in 90 days on the feasibility of creating a Veteran Suicide Review Team, much like those developed in New York and Montana, to understand the underlying causes of veteran suicides better and produce policy recommendations to better serve our nation's veterans.

This is the first partnership of its kind, and we commend the strong partnerships between LA County and the VA of Greater Los Angeles as we move this work forward together.

Reopening and State Tier System

Finally I want to talk about where we are in the reopening process and the ongoing pandemic.

The County is following the careful recommendations of the health officer, scientists, medical drs at DPH as well as our DPH Director Barbara Ferrer - each week DPH is evaluating the numbers and what the state allows us to do and making recommendations - these will evolve as we learn more about the virus and study the current number of cases, hospital beds, and our positivity rate.

In August - Governor Newsom introduced the new Blueprint for a Safer Economy to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The revised criteria guides each county with loosening and tightening restrictions on activities. It became effective on August 31. Every county is assigned to a color tier based on its rate of new cases and current positivity to determine which sectors can operate. Los Angeles County is currently in the Widespread (purple) tier, which is the highest tier.

Although LA County met the State's metric thresholds for Tier 2 - 2 weeks ago, L.A. County remains in Tier 1 due to the current adjusted daily case rate of 7.3 cases per 100,000 residents per day. Per the State guidelines, to move to Tier 2, the County's case rate needs to be 7 or fewer new cases per day per 100,000 residents for two consecutive weeks. The County's test positivity rate is 2.9% which places the County in Tier 3 for this metric. The State places Counties in the most restrictive Tier when the metrics fall in two different tiers, so the County remains in Tier 1 because the daily case rate indicates there is still widespread transmission in our communities. We need 2 weeks of data that is consecutive to qualify for Tier 2 and last week because of our case rate, we didn't qualify.

We will sit in Tier 1 for at least another 3 weeks.

That being said - let's talk about some of the safe re-openings this week -

Beginning, Monday, October 5, schools can apply for a waiver to reopen their classrooms for in-person instruction for students in grades TK through 2. To apply, schools must complete an online application available at www.publichealth.lacounty.gov. Additionally The program prioritizes the issuance of waivers to schools with higher percentages of students qualified for free/reduced meals and is capped at 30 schools per week spread amongst the Supervisorial Districts. The review process will take 2-3 weeks and includes consultation with the California Department of Public Health.

The timeline for the re-opening of additional sectors are the following:

- As of October 1, **nail salons** resumed indoor services at 25% capacity. Outdoor services should continue as much as possible.
- As of, October 5, **cardrooms** can reopen for outdoor operations only. Food and beverages may not be served at the tables. Face coverings are required.
- On October 7, **indoor shopping malls** will be allowed to reopen with occupancy limited to 25% capacity; all food courts and all common areas remain closed.
- **Outside playgrounds** can reopen at the discretion of cities and L.A. County Parks and Recreation. Face coverings and physical distancing are required.

Public Health continues to support businesses in complying with the required protocols that make employees and the community as safe as possible, and offers to all businesses and employees the COVID-19 Safety Compliance Certification Program. This free training allows businesses and employees to learn about safety protocols and to self-certify that they have completed the training. To date, 1,903 employers and 1,949 employees have completed the training. Once completed, business owners receive a certificate, and window seal to display on their storefront, which can reassure employees and customers alike that the business is following COVID-19 infection control and physical distancing requirements.

Public Health's compliance team continues to visit businesses across the County every day. While the inspectors' goal is to assist businesses become compliant with requirements, they do continue to issue citations that result in fines and unfortunately closings to those who are unable or refuse to take the steps needed to protect their workforce and community.