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BOARD APPROVES RIDLEY-THOMAS' REQUEST TO FUND COUNTY'S SUMMER ARTS INTERN PROGRAM

LOS ANGELES – At the request of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Board of Supervisors today averted the suspension of the County's Arts Internship program this summer by allocating \$250,000 to fund the program.

The money will fund 75 college internships – 45 fewer than last year – for college students chosen by non-profit community based arts organizations.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said the internship program provides these organizations "with an infusion of new energy, fresh, creative ideas and talent, and widens and deepens the pool of volunteers, staff, advocates and leaders necessary to continue to enrich the cultural sector of the County."

"By funding this program, the Board also plants the seed of economic development for these organizations and the community in which they operate and serve," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

The program was slated to be suspended because of the County's budget problems. In his March 19 report to the Board, the County Chief Executive Officer determined that loaning the money to program was "not a feasible option."

But at Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' request, the Board voted to use money from the County's Provisional Financing Uses fund for the \$250,000 that will continue the program.

Since its inception, 1,292 paid interns have participated in this program, which provides on-the-job, relevant experience and exposure to these young adults. A demographic report issued by the Arts Commission provides data from 2005, affirms the wide reach this program has extended across the County:

Supervisory District	Number of Interns
First District	86
Second District	151
Third District	132
Fourth District	63
Fifth District	155
Outside LA County or Unknown	48
Total	635

While some of the arts organizations participate in the program include large organizations, many are smaller organizations, which provide direct services and culturally appropriate programs to the community in which they reside.

At a recent Board meeting, speakers representing the corporate and non-profit sectors, as well as former Arts Program interns, addressed the Board on the importance of maintaining the program that has a proven track record of developing much needed life skills in its participants.

Gabriel Perez, a former Arts Program intern, praised the program for helping to change his life. Laura Walters, who provides creative and visual arts services for people with developmental disabilities, said internships have been instrumental in helping participants work toward vocations with local radio stations

And Jim Hurr, a representative of the Boeing Company, declared the program is essential to help developing youth for a 21st workforce.

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SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS URGES REVIEW OF PROBATION DEPARTMENT'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS UNITS

LOS ANGELES – Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas today urged the Board of Supervisors to direct the County's Office of Independent Review (OIR) to conduct an immediate review of procedures needed to prevent incidents of abuse between department personnel and the minors under their care.

Today's motion continues Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' efforts to restore public confidence and ensure the safety of youth under the custody of the County's Probation Department.

Last week, he hosted a community forum featuring Interim Probation Chief Cal Remington and drew a standing-room-only crowd of about 150 people to his Exposition Park field office.

Allegations of inappropriate contact between Probation Department employees and the juveniles under their responsibility were recently investigated by the department's "Child Abuse Special Investigations Unit" and the Internal Affairs Unit. The OIR is now charged with conducting an investigation of the manner in which these investigations are conducted.

"The fairness and accuracy of these investigations is critical to public confidence in the Probation Department, the protection, health and safety of the juveniles under the custody of the Department and the credibility of the CASIU and IAU, and the primary investigation units," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

"However, the CEO's report omitted a review of the protocols necessary to prevent future incidents of abuse between minors and Probation personnel. Moreover, any final report prepared by OIR must be a written report."

The Supervisor urged the OIR to work with the Acting Chief Probation Officer, in conjunction with the Chief Executive Officer and County Counsel, to return with a written report within 60 days after the date the incoming Chief Probation Officer assumes his responsibilities.

“The Board of Supervisors has sent a clear message that physical and sexual abuse in the County’s probation camps will not be tolerated,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

He noted that there are currently hundreds of misconduct allegations, including reports of adults molesting minors.

“The scale of misconduct demands a probe of the system, not just individual employees,” he said. “We must find out how adults are able to commit atrocious acts in what should be a controlled environment.”

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