

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
AND SHEILA KUEHL**

September 26, 2017

SUPPORT FOR THE 2017-18 GIRLS BUILD LOS ANGELES INITIATIVE

In the last two decades, women have made significant advances in educational attainment, rates of employment, and business ownership, but parity has not been actualized in all domains, and this is often compounded by ethnicity and socio-economic status. This is particularly important in Los Angeles County (County), the most populous county in the nation, and one that it is highly diversified by race and socio-economic status. According to the 2017 report on the Status of Women and Girls in Los Angeles County, one out of every eight Californians is a woman or girl residing in the County. That equates to nearly 5.2 million women and girls residing in the County, of which 74 percent identify as a woman or girl of color and 1.8 million as immigrants.

Statewide and in the County, women hold the majority of all post-secondary and master’s degrees, excluding professional and doctoral degrees. The number of women earning undergraduate degrees in science and mathematics in California has increased, yet women remain immensely underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) majors and careers. This is not unique to California. According to the United States Department of Education, women across the country earn more than half of the bachelor degrees in the life sciences and health profession majors, but less than three percent in the fields of engineering, mathematics, statistics and computer sciences.

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To address this gap, the LA Promise Fund will embark on the third year of its “Girls Build LA” initiative which provides early exposure to STEM content to close the gender gap in STEM fields and challenges young women from public middle and high schools across the County to use STEM principles and 21st Century learning skills to address disparities and effect social change. The program will launch during October to help young women develop critical analysis and project management skills which can contribute to closing the gender and racial gaps in these fields. This year, the LA Promise Fund will select 50 teams to compete in the Girls Build LA Challenge. Selected teams will receive seed funding, training, and materials to implement an organic, community-based, data-driven intervention to their challenge. All projects integrate STEM principles and address three core impact areas: Health & Wellness, Civic Engagement & Leadership, and STEM & College Access. Teams choose to address an issue they want to change, within an impact area which directly affects them and their community. Participating teams will create a website, develop social media campaigns, and use professional communication tools to share their progress throughout the program.

Since 2015 more than 20,000 girls have participated in Girls Build LA events, including Girls Empowerment Month field trips, the Girls Build LA Challenge, and movie screenings featuring women who challenged the status quo and/or excelled in STEM careers. In 2015, Girls Build LA hosted the west coast premiere of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai’s biopic “He Named Me Malala,” for nearly 7,000 students. In 2016, nearly 10,000 students attended Girls Build LA’s special screening of “Hidden Figures,” the Academy Award-nominated film that tells the story of a group of African American women mathematicians who were instrumental in NASA's first successful space launch.

In 2015 and 2016, the County supported Girls Build LA by proclaiming October “Girls’ Empowerment Month,” and providing student transportation for Girls Build LA events. Given the significant impact Girls Build LA has had on the students who

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participated, as well as on their peers, families, schools, and communities, the County should once again provide its support.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Proclaim the month of October 2017 as “Girls’ Empowerment Month” throughout the County of Los Angeles;
2. Encourage all County employees and residents to learn more about Girls Build LA by visiting <http://www.lapromisefund.org/girls-build-la>;
3. Find that financing of special event transportation for Girls Build LA events is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Section 21080(b)(10) of the Public Resources Code; and
4. Instruct the Director of Public Works to disburse up to \$65,000 from the Top of Pot allocation of the County’s Proposition A Local Return Transit Program to the LA Promise Fund for Public Schools in order to reimburse the participating school districts for the transportation costs associated with Girls Build LA events that will take place over the 2017-18 academic year. Funding is included in the Transit Enterprise Fund Fiscal Year 2017-18 Budget.

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