



FOR

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## **Los Angeles County to Expand Worker Protections Amid COVID-19 Pandemic**

During one of the most unprecedented and challenging moments for workers in the history of Los Angeles County, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to expand worker protections. [The motion](#), authored by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and co-authored by Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, establishes the Office of Labor Equity to promote and enforce the County's labor laws as well as lead policy research and development with a focus on racial, health, and economic equity.

"As we discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the health and financial well-being of our residents, it seems more important than ever to further explore how we can better support our workforce," said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. "This pandemic is dynamic – and has pushed us to be dynamic in our response, specifically to support our workforce, many of whom are providing essential services and keeping our economy afloat."

According to the motion, Los Angeles County has experienced unemployment rates of approximately 20% over the past few months, and the total unemployment claims in the State of California since March 8, 2020 has surpassed 7.1 million. A July 2020 study by the California Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Division indicated that workplace transmissions account for almost half of COVID-19 cases, and these impacts are particularly felt among the Latinx and Black workers that represent a disproportionately large portion of the essential workforce.

"It's even more difficult these days to be a low-wage essential worker," said Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. "You are barely able to make it financially and to make it even worse, your employer has made clear they will not enforce COVID-19 public health guidelines. Your dilemma: should you risk your job or your life? That's why we want to make sure that employees can report violations of our County Health Orders and feel confident they will

not face retaliation from their employer. By creating an Office of Labor Equity, we can make sure that workers will have their rights protected and not have to jeopardize their jobs in order to protect their health and safety.”

Studies by the Brookings Institute and Harvard Business Review have shown that strong worker protections decrease turnover and increase productivity, preserve employer-employee relations, and attract economically complex industries that accelerate regional economic growth.

“This is not only a necessary investment in our most vulnerable workers,” said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. “This is a prudent investment in the future of our region.”

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