

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Council President Georgette Gómez Issues Statement on Passage of City Budget

Spending Plan Prioritizes Community Services, Begins to Tackle Systemic Inequities

SAN DIEGO – City Council President Georgette Gómez today issued the following statement after the Council voted to pass a budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year that begins on July 1:

“This is an extraordinarily difficult time for San Diegans. While we are facing a pandemic and a recession, and reckoning with racism all at once, I am determined to ensure that City government meets this moment to protect the health, dignity, and economic future of every San Diegan.

“Last night, the City Council passed a budget that plants the seeds of a multi-year effort to root out systemic inequities in San Diego while restoring and expanding community services that residents of disadvantaged communities need.

“The budget for the next fiscal year creates a new Office of Race and Equity to provide the space for the community and City to work together to confront systemic racial inequities and provides \$3 million for a Community Equity Fund to support organizations that do the hard work to uplift their communities.

“I stand in solidarity with the thousands of people who have taken to the streets to demand that our government make meaningful progress in addressing the root causes of the serious issues that plague our city and cities across the country. This new office will provide increased community access to the decision-making process.

“These efforts work hand-in-hand with sweeping reforms already in motion, including a new ban on police officers’ use of the carotid restraint and a measure proposed for the November ballot that would create an independent commission on police practices. That measure is docketed for discussion at the June 23 City Council meeting.

“I want to thank Councilmember Monica Montgomery, in particular, for her vision and leadership on public safety and racial equity.

“Additionally, we will begin to shift the way our City approaches outreach to unsheltered residents. This budget includes \$1.5 million to move us away from our current system, where police officers serve as a first point of contact with people experiencing homelessness, and toward a proven, person-centered model where social workers build trust over time and work cooperatively with people to address their unique challenges. This budget restores a lengthy list of services that had been targeted for cuts – including full library, parks, recreation center, and swimming pool hours; weed and graffiti removal; tree trimming and planting; pothole repairs; and enforcement of our living wage and minimum wage laws. These are services that communities most affected by systemic racism and lack of opportunity rely on.

“I am grateful to my Council colleagues for also supporting my call to work toward closing the digital divide in our city – the budget includes \$500,000 for a program to develop free and low-cost internet access for low-income communities.

“Our budget also responds to a looming crisis facing families and individuals who have lost income due to the COVID-19 pandemic by allocating \$15.1 million to rental relief efforts. We must not allow this public-health emergency to push our struggling residents into homelessness, further reinforcing inequities.

"I come from community organizing and activism, and that background informs all of my work as a public servant. The strife that we are experiencing together is something that one City budget alone cannot fix. It's bigger, and deeper. Much more must be done, including ongoing discussions regarding the police budget. This is the first step of a long march toward building trust in government and law enforcement and providing all San Diegans with access to health, respect, and opportunity.

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Council President Gómez represents the Ninth Council District of the City of San Diego, which includes the communities of Alvarado Estates, City Heights, College Area, College View Estates, El Cerrito, Kensington, Mountain View, Mt. Hope, Rolando, Southcrest, and Talmadge. She chairs the City of San Diego Rules Committee and sits on the Metropolitan Transit System Board of Directors and on the SANDAG Board of Directors and Executive Board.