

Lopez, Maria [COB]

From: Lesley Velasco <lesley@ah-ri.org>
Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2026 7:00 PM
To: COB_Response
Subject: OC BOS Meeting 6/9/2026 Agenda Item 11

Attention: This email originated from outside the County of Orange. Use caution when opening attachments or links.

Hi, my name is Lesley Velasco and I am the Civic Engagement Manager at Ahri for Justice. Ahri for Justice is a community-based organization, located in District 4, advocating for collective justice for low-income communities of color through civic engagement, advocacy, and youth leadership.

Ahri for Justice is also a core partner of the Abundant Community Transformations (ACT) Coalition. ACT urges Orange County to create a budget process that is more transparent, accountable, and inclusive of meaningful public participation. As constituents and community-based organizations, we believe residents should have a stronger voice in shaping how public funds are allocated and invested in our communities.

To strengthen the County's budget process and ensure resources are directed toward community priorities, we recommend the following:

- **Partner with trusted community-based organizations to develop actionable solutions that address residents' needs and lived experiences.**
- **Support policies that protect access to healthcare and promote economic security for all Orange County residents.**
- **Establish a Community Participatory Budget Council to provide community input and recommendations on discretionary spending decisions.**

In 2025, ACT conducted a multilingual survey in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean to better understand which county programs and services Orange County residents consider most important, most overlooked, and most in need of additional funding.

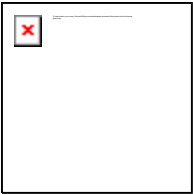
The survey findings highlighted a pressing concern: homelessness continues to impact communities throughout Orange County. Respondents consistently identified homelessness as a widespread issue that remains inadequately addressed and requires more comprehensive, holistic, long-term solutions. Residents expressed a desire to see greater investment in programs that address the root causes of housing instability and provide pathways to permanent housing.

In response to these community priorities, Ahri for Justice strongly urges the Board to allocate additional funding toward homelessness prevention programs, affordable housing initiatives, mental health services, and permanent supportive housing. Strategic investments in these areas can help address immediate needs while creating lasting solutions that promote stability, dignity, and well-being for Orange County residents.

Centering community voices in the budget process is essential to building an Orange County that works for everyone. By creating meaningful opportunities for public engagement and investing in community-driven solutions, the County can better address urgent challenges like homelessness and ensure public resources reflect the needs and priorities of its residents.

Thank you for your consideration,

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Lesley Velasco

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"paving new pathways to collective justice"