

From

Richard Alarcón

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ALARCON INTRODUCES MOTION TO CREATE UPDATED POVERTY MEASURE IN THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles, CA – The day after Councilmember Alarcón held a hearing of the Ad Hoc Committee on Ending Poverty in Los Angeles that included presentations on the inadequacy of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, he introduced a motion that instructs appropriate city departments to develop a “self-sufficiency index” for the City of Los Angeles. This self-sufficiency index will reflect the regional cost of living, including health care, food, housing, child care, transportation and other basic necessities.

“The Federal Poverty Guidelines are a myth – in no way, shape or form do they accurately reflect what it takes a family or individual to make ends meet in today’s economy,” said Councilmember Alarcón. “My motion will create a measure that takes into account all the factors that are part of being self-sufficient, giving us a clearer understanding of the challenges that our city faces and the reality of poverty in Los Angeles and will allow us to more effectively target our resources.”

Just over a week ago, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced that the City of New York would be changing the definition of what qualifies as poverty. New York City elected to use a formula developed by the National Academy of Sciences in 1995. Last Friday, Senator Obama also re-iterated his support for updating the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Alarcón has been a long-time advocate for updating the Federal Poverty Guidelines to a self-sufficiency standard. As a State Senator, in 2003 Alarcón introduced a state resolution in support of updating the Federal Poverty Guidelines, SJR 15 and as a Councilmember he introduced a similar resolution that was supported by the City Council and Mayor Villaraigosa. Senator Barack Obama sent a letter in support of this resolution as well. Additionally, last August, Councilmember submitted testimony to the House Sub-Committee on Income Security and Family Support for the Hearing on Measuring Poverty in America that was held on August 1, 2007 by Sub-Committee Chairman Jim McDermott (WA-7). In his testimony, Councilmember Alarcón expressed his support for updating the Federal Poverty Guidelines in order to create more targeted and efficient policy decisions.

Councilmember Alarcón is the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Ending Poverty in Los Angeles and currently oversees the creation of a Master Plan to End Poverty in Los Angeles. He is working with a coalition of activists, service providers, academics, business leaders, policy makers and staff to draft the Master Plan which will include chapters on Health, Hunger, Community and Economic Development, Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure, Labor, Education and Public Safety. In addition, Councilmember Alarcón is holding a series of hearings of the Ad Hoc on the Master Plan chapters. To date he has held hearings on Community and Economic Development and Labor and Industrial Relations. He will be holding at least five more hearings on the Master Plan in the coming months. The work of the Ad Hoc Committee follows several years of work at the State Senate where Alarcón was the Chair of the Select Committee to Create a Master Plan to End Poverty in California.