

**HISTORIC HIGHLAND PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL**

Post Office Box 50791  
Los Angeles, CA 90050  
<http://www.highlandparknc.com>  
Certified as NC #33 May 28, 2002

**DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT**

200 N. Spring St. Ste.2005  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Telephone: (213) 978-1551

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

CALIFORNIA



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## **Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council**

Date: March 2020

To: Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and the Members of the Los Angeles City Council

200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: HHPNC Encourages City of Los Angeles to Proclaim April as Autism Awareness Month

The Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council, which represents more than 60,000 Los Angeles stakeholders who reside, own property, or conduct business in our neighborhood, supports and encourages education about the neurological disorder of autism and strongly encourages the City of Los Angeles to issue a proclamation recognizing April as Autism Awareness Month.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain and impacts development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with Autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.

Autism is the most common of the five Pervasive Developmental Disorders and, according to the Centers for Disease Control estimates, affects approximately 1 in 60 births, translating to millions of Americans today believed to have some form of Autism. Autism is a spectrum disorder and it affects each individual differently and at varying degrees, which is why early diagnosis is so crucial. By learning the signs, we can benefit children by directing them to one of the many specialized intervention programs.

California has seen a marked increase in the number of public school students diagnosed as autistic including a seven percent jump in diagnosed cases between 2015 and 2016. Since 2006, the number of autistic students state-wide has risen by between 5,000 and 7,000 every year, state figures show. California scientists have discovered clusters of [autism](#), largely in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas, where children are twice as likely to have autism as children in surrounding areas. Based on statistics from the United States Department of Education and other governmental agencies, Autism is growing at a startling rate of 10 to 17 percent per year. At this rate, the Autism Society of America estimates that the prevalence of autism could reach 4 million Americans in the next decade.

Autism knows no racial, ethnic, social boundaries, family income, lifestyle, or educational levels and can affect any family and any child. Fears that modern vaccines cause autism have led some parents to forego vaccinating their children. The American Academy of Pediatrics [says no evidence exists](#) linking autism to vaccines. California state law eliminates "personal belief exemptions" allowing parents to opt their children out of vaccinations before starting school.

Theories for the rise, which has been seen nationwide, include improved autism screening, broader definitions of the condition and more children who were either born with autism or who developed the condition due to environmental factors.

We encourage the Mayor and City Council to send signed copies of the adopted resolution to California Governor Gavin Newsom, California Senators Kamala Harris and Dianne Feinstein, the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council, and others as deemed appropriate.

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