

July 5, 2023

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager *SML*

Subject: Staffing Update – Department of Economic Inclusion

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Department of Economic Inclusion (DEI) Director Collin Mays is leaving City service effective July 1, 2023. Laura Castillo has been appointed Interim Director, effective July 5, 2023, after serving as the Deputy Director of the Department. With a decade of experience in leading community impact initiatives in Cincinnati, Laura's passion for innovation and focus on accessibility has proven essential in shaping the Department's strategic vision for positively impacting local businesses.

During her tenure, Laura has played an invaluable role in various accomplishments, including streamlining the MBE/WBE/SBE certification process, boosting community outreach efforts, expanding training and resources for business owners, and uplifting businesses after the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Laura obtained her M.A. in Urban and Regional Sustainability and Resilience from Xavier University. Prior to joining the City's DEI team, Laura served as the Research and Advocacy Coordinator for Housing Opportunities Made (HOME), where she made significant contributions to the development of the *Roadmap for Increasing Black Homeownership, aiming to make generational wealth through homeownership available to everyone in Cincinnati and Hamilton County*. She also worked as a Community Outreach Specialist with Price Hill Will, demonstrating her commitment to empowering Cincinnati's residents through local initiatives.

Beyond her professional commitments, Laura volunteers with numerous community organizations. She serves on the board of trustees for Cincinnati's chapter of The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the largest and oldest Hispanic organization in the United States. Additionally, she contributes her time to Casa De Paz, an organization that provides community support for Latina women recovering from trauma in Cincinnati.

In her free time, Laura enjoys going to vintage stores and tackling new hiking trails. Laura's deep-seated passion for economic empowerment stems from her personal background. As a first-generation Mexican-American hailing from a family led by a single mother who owned a small restaurant, she experienced firsthand the economic pressures and challenges faced by small business owners, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the closure of her family's business. Through her experiences, Laura understands and aims to break down the barriers that impede dignity, prosperity, and government trust for small business owners. She is deeply focused on making Cincinnati a more welcoming place for individuals embarking on their entrepreneurial journeys.

cc: Virginia Tallent, Assistant City Manager  
William "Billy" Weber, Assistant City Manager