



MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMEMBER | DISTRICT 10

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Councilmember Ridley-Thomas Celebrates 30 Years of Public Service and Hosts Ribbon Cutting Ceremony For The Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Wellness Center

In celebration of Councilmember Ridley-Thomas' 30 years of public service in elected office and the ribbon cutting of the Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Wellness Center, a luncheon was hosted at the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science (CDU) campus on September 16th. The event included remarks from CDU leadership, Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, and Reverend James M. Lawson Jr, in addition to a dialogue among long time colleagues Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas, Ms. Avis Ridley-Thomas, Congresswoman Karen Bass, and Professor Cornel West, which was moderated by ABC7 Eyewitness News co-anchor Marc Brown.

Over his three decades of public service Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas has made an indelible mark on countless issues that have impacted our region - from leading efforts to address the homelessness crisis and supporting the development of thousands of affordable housing units to investing in both the physical and intellectual infrastructure needed to elevate underserved communities.

"When I embarked on this journey three decades ago, I could never have imagined the enormity and dynamism of the challenges we would face, nor did I anticipate the resilience and ingenuity of the countless friends and colleagues with whom I have collaborated," said Councilmember Ridley-Thomas. "After all these years, one thing is clear - it's easy to focus on deficits and deficiencies in our public systems and within our broader communities. My personal commitment, and my governing philosophy, has always been to be asset-based. And there is no better example of what can be accomplished than the transformation of the Willowbrook community over the past decade. The new facilities,

both on the Martin Luther King Jr. Medical Campus, and at Charles Drew University, exemplify a profound commitment to community empowerment - we have focused on mental health, recovery, trauma prevention, rehabilitation, and the other essential wrap-around services that promote long-term wellness. Avis and I could not be more proud that our names will accompany the new Wellness Center on the CDU campus - a location focused on ensuring that CDU students will be properly cared for, just as they prepare to care for others.”

CDU is a private, nonprofit, community-founded, student-centered University committed to cultivating diverse health professions leaders who are dedicated to social justice and health equity for underserved populations through outstanding education, clinical service, and community engagement. Over 80 percent of students and 71 percent of faculty are from communities of color. In 2017, CDU was credited by The Chronicle of Higher Education as the second most diverse four-year private nonprofit college in the nation.

The Wellness Center will provide urgent care, mental health counseling, and wellness programs to CDU students, faculty, and staff within the 10,000 square foot building, with an emphasis on counseling services that promote student success and emotional well-being.

“Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science have been change agents for Willowbrook and the surrounding communities for decades,” noted Dr. David M. Carlisle, President and CEO of CDU. “It is very fitting that a building on our campus dedicated to improving health outcomes for students and underserved populations for decades to come will bear the Ridley-Thomas name.”

APLA Health's newest Health Center will be co-located with the Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Wellness Center. A non-profit organization, APLA Health aims to achieve health care equity and promote well-being for the LGBTQ+ community, particularly in underserved communities, and people living with and affected by HIV. Since 2005, they have served Black and Latinx communities on the Martin Luther King Jr. Medical Campus, focusing on removing the many health disparities that disproportionately affect communities of color, including higher rates of HIV infection and chronic diseases, and serving LGBTQ+ individuals who may not seek medical care due to the crushing stigma around sexual orientation and gender identity.

“Our goal with this new health center is to reduce the number of new HIV infections in the Willowbrook, Watts, Compton and Lynwood communities by providing culturally competent, convenient and accessible sexual health services, along with LGBTQ+ focused primary medical care, dental and behavioral health services,” said Craig E. Thompson, CEO of APLA Health. “We know that the most effective way to end the epidemic is by offering these services in communities that have the greatest need and addressing disparate health outcomes head on.”

The new facility, set to open this Fall, will provide low-cost health services to more than 5,000 local-area residents annually when fully operationalized.

For additional assets please click [here](#).

For more information, please visit: <http://markridley-thomas.lacity.org/>

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