



For Immediate Release:

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## Community Coalition Hires Ryan Smith as First Chief Strategy Officer

LOS ANGELES, April 26, 2022 – [Community Coalition](#) (CoCo) is thrilled to announce the hiring of Ryan Smith as CoCo's first-ever Chief Strategy Officer. Ryan will focus on supporting Angelenos suffering from systemic and institutional barriers within education and beyond, particularly impacting Black and Latino communities. With nearly 20 years of advocacy experience in South Los Angeles, Ryan will help guide the organization's outreach efforts and launch their new National Center for Community Organizing.

Ryan joins CoCo's strong executive bench with Alberto Retana, President and CEO; Aurea Montes-Rodriguez, EVP; Gerri Lawrence, COO; and Leslie Johnson, VP of Organizational Development.

"I am honored to embark on the next chapter of my career with Community Coalition. Together, I am confident we will continue to make strides advancing racial and economic justice across every level of government from the local school board to city, county, and federal government," **said Ryan Smith, Community Coalition CSO.** "This month marks the first anniversary of my father's passing, and his goal to end homelessness in South Los Angeles has inspired me to think differently about supporting folks suffering from systemic and institutional barriers within education and beyond. Working with CoCo, I am committed to supporting Black and Latinx folks across South LA as we work to heal and rebuild in the wake of the pandemic. I am thrilled to be joining the likes of Alberto Retana, Leslie Johnson, and Aurea Montes-Rodriguez on their executive team and look forward to the progress we will make together."

Prior to CoCo, Ryan was the Chief External Officer at Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, an in-district organization dedicated to transforming schools and empowering students with a high-quality education in one of the largest in-district public school transformation organizations in the US. Ryan also served as the Director of Education Programs and Policy for the United Way of Greater Los Angeles, where he was responsible for the education program and policy efforts for the organization, and the Vice President of Strategic Advocacy for the Education Trust, an education civil rights organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps.

Born and raised in Los Angeles County, Ryan has authored more than a dozen editorials and opinion pieces published in the Los Angeles Times and other publications and was named by Education Week as one of the “Ten Education Leaders to Watch” nationally. He also received the Families in Schools’ “Parent Engagement Leader of the Year Award.”

In addition to hiring Ryan as the first CSO, CoCo is committed to widening its bench of strong leadership through the promotion of Gerri Lawrence to COO, and the appointment of Keith Weaver as Chair of the board. These additions to CoCo's already strong team will enable the organization to reach its greatest heights in 2022.