

May 7, 2025

Re: [San José Youth Empowerment Alliance, Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together, Safe Summer Initiative Grant, and Youth Intervention Services Programs Annual Report](#)

Dear Chair Ortiz, Vice Chair Doan, and members of the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee:

This letter is submitted by the Community Safety Workgroup of the Race Equity Action Leadership (REAL) coalition.

We appreciate the work of city staff to prioritize violence prevention and ensure alignment between the work of the San José Youth Empowerment Alliance and the Children and Youth Services Master Plan.

We want to highlight a few elements of the report we think are in need of further exploration and discussion, and perhaps more attention, or a shift in focus. As the report notes, juvenile arrests are on the rise. While there are many reasons for this trend, it insists we think differently about violence prevention work.

There is no mention of disability in the report

A majority of justice-involved youth live with one or more disabilities, including learning disabilities and mental illness. The objective to reduce chronic absenteeism describes a plan of "outreach, engagement, and academic supportive services focusing on attendance and family circumstances" but makes no mention of disabilities, how they may contribute to absenteeism, or the plan to ensure youth are receiving the supports they require.

The balance of intervention efforts is tilted toward law enforcement

The report states the "objective of increasing engagement and trust among the community, schools, and law enforcement will incorporate efforts to reduce violent incidents on school campuses, addressing the needs of young offenders, and reducing youth violence, injury and deaths in coordination and collaboration with the San José Police Department and the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office."

Earlier this year, Santa Clara County created an Office of Violence Prevention with an explicit public health focus that prioritizes creating community initiatives that promote the safety and well-being of all, while accounting for the social determinants of health and structural factors, like racism.

We're excited about the potential this new County initiative holds for expanding and improving violence prevention efforts and we encourage the City to embrace collaboration even if it requires a shift in direction.

BEST programs and Street Outreach evaluation - and the RFQ process - must be completely transparent

We agree the City should conduct regular assessments of its violence prevention/intervention work. Given the popularity and effectiveness of BEST programming as reflected in the survey results, we think program evaluations should consider which programs would benefit from increased funding. We also ask that the City be explicit in explaining how and why different programs are chosen or not chosen for funding.

As always, we are ready to roll up our sleeves in a collaborative spirit to help make San José a safer city for everyone.

Sincerely,

Members of the Community Safety Workgroup

About the REAL Coalition

The REAL community of Silicon Valley based nonprofit leaders and allies has been meeting since June 2020 to use our positional power to advocate for a more racially-just and equitable society; to establish a peer network of leaders committed to fighting white supremacy and systemic racism in ourselves and our institutions; and to hold each other accountable to the promises we made in the Nonprofit Racial Equity Pledge. The REAL coalition is broadly representative of the nonprofit community including human and community services, behavioral health and health, arts and culture, domestic violence, older adults, food security, education, environmental, farming, legal, disability rights, LGTBQ rights, ethnic, immigrant rights, housing and homelessness, criminal justice reform, urban planning, and intermediary organizations, and others. Over 125 organizations have participated in the REAL Coalition.