



COUNCIL AGENDA: 6/15/2021
FILE: 21-1378
ITEM: 3.3

Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Sylvia Arenas

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: June 14, 2021

Approved

Date

Sylvia Arenas

6/14/2021

SUBJECT: MAYOR'S JUNE BUDGET MESSAGE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Direct the City Manager to support the Mayor's child care message, on page 16, by convening a joint meeting of the Neighborhood Services Committee and the Committee of the Whole and a county equivalent committee to develop a child well-being strategy that utilizes future American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to:
 - a. Partner with relevant stakeholders that deliver services for children. Ensure that the direction includes the needs of children of elementary school ages as well as children zero to five.
 - b. Include in the scope of discussion the trends observed by city mandated reporters of abuse and county response.
- 2) Accept Mayor's recommendation to defer direct investment in programs to support the needs of children from ARP funds until more information is available, and:
 - a. Direct the City Manager to bring forward funding for the strategy that results from the convened joint meeting described in item 1.
 - b. Reallocate \$500,000 from the \$22,100,000 allocated for Food and Necessities to transition children that participated in our COVID-19 Child Care Learning Pods to safe subsidized afterschool care programs this fall.
- 3) Add references to MBA #9 and BD #93 Arenas in the Mayor's "Child and Youth Success" sub-section (pages 15-16), as two additional budget documents that are partially incorporated into the budget in this section, similar to budget document references throughout the Mayor's message, as: "(MBA #9 and BD #93 Arenas)".
- 4) Direct the City Manager to bring forward in the mid-year budget a plan to ensure that cost is not a primary factor in determining the sexual assault forensic exam provided to child victims of sexual assault.
- 5) Direct staff to ensure that the job responsibilities for Resilience Corps members are primarily skilled work, and that the young people hired for these positions are not assigned primarily for unskilled labor, such as picking up trash at encampments. Ensure a

scope of work that provides training and the development of marketable skills and a career trajectory to achieve a living wage.

- 6) Direct staff to include continued review of MBA #8's option 1 as part of their review for additional strategies with the remaining ARP funds, to invest in bringing City staff a promotores model for community outreach, through cost savings from Food & Necessities.

BACKGROUND

Children have been deeply affected by the pandemic. As Erin Einhorn has reported for NBC News, it has “taken an unthinkable toll on children — a social, emotional and academic ordeal so extreme that some advocates and experts warn its repercussions could rival those of a hurricane or other disaster.”¹

This trend is only all too true in San Jose. And it is made worse by the extreme concentration of these effects in low-income communities of color, who have suffered the highest positivity rates, death rates, unemployment rates, disconnection from education services rates, and the lowest vaccination rates.

As the pandemic expanded, San Jose's PRNS and Library teams mobilized to convert our existing education and recreational services programs to the Child Care Learning Pod program. This program was exceptionally successful in both its delivery of services, it's equity approach, and it's deepening and strengthening of coordination between school districts, teachers, and Library and PRNS staff. Most importantly, it delivered support services to children that normally wouldn't have access to our city for fee programs and during critical stages of child development that can only be described as life-changing for scholarship recipient families.

That is why I submitted budget documents to advocate for dedicated ARP funds to continue supporting children in our City's annual budget process (BD# 89, #92, #93, #96). However the proposed budget asks our children to wait, despite the staggering need. I want to ensure that the City Administration works swiftly with key partners like the Santa Clara County Office of Education, Grail Family Services, First 5, Go Kids, Catalyst Community, the Superintendents from Alum Rock Unified School District, Franklin McKinley School District, Evergreen Elementary School District, San Jose Unified School District, and other key partners to ensure that the direction includes the childcare needs of children of elementary school ages as well as children zero to five, focus ARP funds directly on the cost of child care for families, and that direction for a childcare strategy does not leave gaps in services for families currently receiving the City's recreational programs as part of their childcare solution.

¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/covid-having-devastating-impact-children-vaccine-won-t-fix-everything-n1251172>

Without explicit plans to dedicate sufficient funding, and plans to authorize emergency appropriations for children's programs, children will continue to hold the short straw. No other group of San Jose residents are being asked to wait for investments – in fact enormous resources are currently being mobilized to appease neighbors frustrated with increased litter in city neighborhoods.

As our City prepares for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and children return to in-person learning, we must also anticipate and account for the high potential of underreporting of child sexual abuse during the past 15 months of distance learning, and the potential for elevated reporting now that children return to in-person learning. While the discussions with Children's Advocacy Center of Santa Clara County stakeholders were delayed due to the VTA Rail Yard Shooting, it is critical that the City Manager's Office realigns and prioritizes the recommendations from the April 29, 2021 City/County Joint Special Meeting with a plan during the mid-year budget to incorporate this critical and immediate need to ensure that cost is not a primary factor in determining the medical and support services provided to child victims of sexual assault.

The future of our City's recovery is determined by how we support our children, youth, and working families and make sure that they are not left behind in the City's recovery plan. We must also re-envision the City's workforce development programs to ensure that the opportunities that we invest in, including the Resiliency Corps, sets our youth and future workforce up for success by including clear pathways to training and the development of marketable skills for a career trajectory to achieve a living wage.

Additionally, we must broaden the workforce opportunities to allow community members an opportunity to earn a living while working to help their neighbors survive and recover from the pandemic. We must dedicate sufficient funding to allow the City Administration's recovery team to work in partnership with our community using a promotores model. This model will allow us to move quickly forward to help our hardest to reach community members connect with support services that are already funded by the county, city, and our non-profit partners. Services that can make a life-saving difference for children, youth, and families as we transition from pandemic to recovery.

These children and youth are voiceless in their suffering. There is no political reward, no active lobbying campaign, no fundraising angle. The children and youth who benefit may never know to thank us. But, simply, it is the right thing to do.

Without an investment in our children, working families in San Jose will be vulnerable and left to choose between working to afford basic needs and quality childcare. If we do not act now, San Jose will continue to see the pre-pandemic trend of an exodus of families that make up the essential fabric of our City.