



City of San José Youth Commission

March 25, 2021

To : Rules Committee

Re : San José Youth Commission – Bill of Right 's for Children and Youth

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council,

Please accept the attached updated Bill of Rights for Children and Youth.

Ten years ago, the Youth Commission presented the City Council with the Bill of Rights for Children and Youth. The Mayor and Council at the time, accepted and approved the Bill as a new resolution. The 2020/2021 Youth Commissioners felt it necessary to revisit this document and update it with the appropriate updates. During the months of January through March, the Youth Commission gathered input from their respective Council District Youth Advisory Council members and on March 15, 2021, convened a citywide Town Hall to create the final updates to this document. These efforts aligns with the 2020-2021 Youth Commission annual workplan which states, the Commission will address specific issues the Youth Commissioners deem important to address on behalf of their peers.

The updated Bill of Rights for Children and Youth has been peer reviewed and feedback was gathered at the Youth Commission March Town Hall. The updated document was presented to the full commission on March 22, 2021 for final review and approval. Members of the public shared their thoughts and showed support for these updated.

Please accept the Youth Commission's Updated Bill of Rights for Children and Youth document attached.

Sincerely,

/s/San Jose Youth Commission
San José Youth Commission

San Jose Youth Bill of Rights for Children and Youth

All children and youth have a right to be safe, healthy, successful in learning, and successful in life regardless of their language, culture, race, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, citizenship, or developmental abilities. San Jose is enriched by the diversity of its children and youth. To benefit from this diversity, we must ensure all children and youth realize the same rights.

Article 1: They have a healthy mind, body, and soul that enables them to maximize their potential.

- A. Provide youth mental and physical health education and support at school and community sites and provide adequate access to community resources.
- B. Direct resources to increase extracurricular outlets in schools and the community.
- C. Provide comprehensive and easily accessible sex education and substance abuse services and resources.
- D. Increase awareness of hotlines and programs for youth in crisis.
- E. Increase accessibility to healthier food options.

Article 2: They have training in life skills that will prepare them to live independently, be self-sufficient, and contribute to their community.

- A. Offer and promote classes, workshops, community events, and/or programs that will prepare youth to be self-sufficient.
- B. Make literacy a community priority by providing classes or programs to increase youth's level of literacy.
- C. Provide resources on financial management.
- D. Provide easy-access vocational training and life skills development workshops.
- E. Provide and incentivize time management classes and/or programs that promote life skills for youth.
- F. Increase awareness of and participation in youth volunteering and community involvement opportunities.

Article 3: They have access to up-to-date educational resources that promote success in life, in future careers, and a love of life-long learning.

- A. Create, maintain, and improve libraries in every district.
- B. Create and expand a teen area within each library and community center.
- C. Establish free peer and adult tutoring programs and homework help in public venues.
- D. Provide easy-access vocational training and life skills development workshops.
- E. Create and promote after-school programs that expose youth to hands-on learning.
- F. Make scholarships and funding opportunities readily available for schools to have funding to purchase up-to-date technology and high-speed internet.
- G. Provide funding opportunities for schools to have supplemental academic material.
- H. Provide access to research databases and wireless internet in public venues.

- I. Provide peer-to-peer mentorship programs.

Article 4: They have employment opportunities with protections from unfair labor practices with guides on how to find jobs that will be beneficial to them.

- A. Provide a consistent standard for youth treatment in the workforce as well as a safe environment that all companies must adopt.
- B. Retain a county employee to conduct random inspections to ensure that companies are enforcing child labor laws as well as equal pay for youth in the same occupation.
- C. Ensure jobs frequently held by youth pay a living wage, not just a minimum wage.
- D. Develop and disseminate a best-practice vocational training model to support youth in their efforts to secure employment.
- E. Increase and advertise youth employment opportunities.

Article 5: They have a voice in their local government to advocate for the issues that matter to them.

- A. Inform youth about laws that impact them.
- B. Support youth in their efforts to express their views on community issues.
- C. Encourage districts to maintain a student board member with an actual vote.
- D. Have a youth member on boards, commissions, organizations, and/or committees.
- E. Develop a structured method for youth to offer input on decision-making.
- F. Create opportunities for youth to vote in community-based groups that focus on solving issues that matter to the youth.
- G. Not infringe upon youth's rights to structure misconduct and participation in government.
- H. Create opportunities for youth input on the commissions that will affect them.

Article 6: They are *safe from mistreatment, abuse, and neglect*.

- A. Provide parents/guardians/caregivers with educational and financial support so they can provide the best possible care for children and youth.
- B. Increase awareness of child abuse, sexual assault, bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, crime, and crisis hotlines.
- C. Provide competent and accessible school-based and community-based counseling and guidance.
- D. Have staff with the capacity to provide resources and intervene when appropriate.
- E. Provide safe spaces such as community centers for all youth to seek shelter and cope with their emotions if they are in a situation where they do not feel safe.
- F. Increase awareness of what mistreatment and abuse look like through city events, campaigns, and presentations.

Article 7: Their essential needs are met including access to basic amenities—nutritious food, housing, clothing, health care, technology, and transportation accessibility.

- A. Provide access to nutritious food, including those of specific dietary types, water, and drink options in addition to subsidizing such in schools so that schools can offer healthy, affordable lunch menus that youth have an incentive to purchase.

- B. Provide youth access to adequate and sanitary housing, as well as proper medical health care and treatment, including necessary medicines such as insulin.
- C. Create opportunities to increase physical activity and mental wellness through schools' public education, after-school programs, community sports teams or programs, and public spaces.
- D. Offer informative cooking and health courses as school electives or in teen centers to inform youth of the various eating disorders and ways to prevent health issues.
- E. Establish nutritional programs teaching healthy eating habits to children and youth.
- F. Increase the accessibility of kitchen resources, technology such as high-speed internet and devices, clothing, and food in their nearby community center.
- G. Improve public transportation accessibility and safety.
- H. Provide funding to community organizations and programs to help families meet basic needs.

Article 8: They have a safe and healthy environment, including homes, schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

- A. Offer comprehensive after-school programs, diversion programs, and school activities delivered by well-trained professionals that foster youth involvement in their communities as well as bring more awareness to activities and behaviors that indicate youth are at-risk.
- B. Consistently enforce equitable rules that do not target certain demographics so that all students feel safe.
- C. Provide youth-oriented safety programs that hone in on community wellness, as well as fund community and wellness-oriented security.
- D. Provide clean school campuses and community venues.
- E. Establish youth-run recycling programs at schools and community venues.
- F. Provide adequate lighting at night throughout the city.
- G. Promote pedestrian and traffic safety through infrastructure development and education, programs, and initiatives that aim to inform youth of knowledge on the roads and reduce drunk driving.

Article 9: They develop ongoing relationships with caring, trusting, and supportive adults.

- A. Offer after-school programs that provide for students from preschool to 12th grade.
- B. Enforce rules that will provide a safe environment/campus and comfortable surroundings for students.
- C. Assist youth who need someone to talk to and help set youth on a path to solving problems.
- D. Create opportunities and incentives for qualified and checked adults to mentor youth such as workplace internship programs and flexible work schedules that allow employees to mentor during school hours.
- E. Provide training for organizations and community groups to meaningfully engage youth in the decision-making process.

- F. Train adult volunteers to foster student-adult relationships.

Article 10: They have knowledge of, are educated about, and actively include people of diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds as well as all genders/gender identities, sexual orientations, citizenship, and developmental abilities, and are aware of the importance of inclusivity and identity. *

- A. Develop festivities and programs to promote cultural, religious, identity, sexuality, and diversity awareness in communities and eliminate stereotypes.
- B. Advocate for, support, and create programs that promote equity and understanding amongst identities.
- C. Encourage participation from communities of various groups.
- D. Provide translation resources to eliminate language barriers in public places to create a more friendly environment for non-native English speakers.
- E. Ensure that community and educational facilities have materials that reflect and celebrate the diversity of San Jose.

* Denotes articles added by the San Jose Youth Commission that are not adopted at the California State level

Sidebar: San Jose Youth Commission Recommendations

The San Jose Youth Commission is a council-appointed body of 11 youth, 14-20 years old, modeled after the City of San Jose City Council. The commissioners are recognized as the official youth advisory group to the City Council and the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services. The role of the Youth Commission is to make policy recommendations pertaining to the City's youth.

Commissioners support the development of youth who desire to serve their community through active, civic participation and constructive decision-making by maintaining a Youth Advisory Council in their district. The San Jose Youth Commission is dedicated to ensuring that the youth voice in San Jose is represented.

The San Mateo Youth Commission and Peninsula Partnership Leadership Council developed the first version of the Children and Youth Bill of Rights in 2008. In 2009, this document was adopted at the California State level.

The San Jose Youth Commission believes that two integral youth rights were missing from the document: an emphasis on peer-to-peer relations and recognition of San Jose's diversity. The commission wanted to emphasize the importance of celebrating diversity and holding youth accountable for their success. For this reason, the San Jose Youth Commission

added the additional articles 10 and 11 to the California Children and Youth Bill of Rights to create a unique document that meets the needs of our city.