



YOUTH COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: President Norman Yee, Board of Supervisors
Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer, Board of Supervisors
Supervisor Matt Haney, Board of Supervisors
Supervisor Gordan Mar, Board of Supervisors

CC: Erica Major, Joint City, School District, and City College Select Committee Clerk
Frances Hsieh, District 7 Legislative Aide
Angelina Yu, District 1 Legislative Aide
Abigail Rivamonte Mesa, District 6 Legislative Aide
Li Miao Lovett, District 4 Legislative Aide

FROM: 2020-2021 Youth Commission

DATE: Thursday, September 24, 2020

RE: Youth Commission Input on BOS File No. 191156 [Hearing - Mental Health Resources for Children and Youth]

The Youth Commission was referred BOS File No. 191156 [Hearing - Mental Health Resources for Children and Youth], unfortunately, the Commission was unable to calendar a special meeting to hear this piece of legislation before the hearing was scheduled.

Due to the critical and time sensitive nature of this particular subject matter and the devastating impact on young people's mental health even more so due to COVID-19, climate fires, and police brutality, individual Commissioners felt it paramount to share their previous [Resolution No. 1920-AL-11 \[Youth Services and Programs – City Response to COVID-19 Pandemic\]](#) legislation (also attached) that speaks to the increased needs for mental health resources. Furthermore, via the Youth Commission's Executive Committee on Wednesday, September 23rd, 2020, these recommendations and questions were discussed about this particular hearing:

- What is the process to ensure equitable services not only for the youth but to ensure there are Black mental health professionals and other people of color?
- What type of styles are going to be provided (i.e., therapy, forms of therapeutic practices, etc.)?
- How will services be provided remotely?
- What are long terms goals for this service?
- How are the youth protected in these spaces (i.e. knowing their rights)?
- How will youth's voice be heard (feedback, input) throughout this?
- Services should be in multiple languages

The Youth Commission thanks you for taking their advisement under consideration.

1 [Youth Services and Programs – City Response to COVID-19 Pandemic]

2

3 **Resolution urging the City to take various actions to support vulnerable youth during**
4 **the COVID-19 Pandemic, to increase at-distance programming for youth in San**
5 **Francisco and to not cut funding for youth-oriented services and programs,**
6 **recommending certain cuts to departments’ budgets, and requesting Youth**
7 **Commission representation on bodies created to respond to the economic and social**
8 **effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

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10 WHEREAS, On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization described COVID-19,
11 an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus, a term designating
12 a family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to
13 more severe diseases, as a pandemic; and

14 WHEREAS, Since March 16, 2020, the City and County of San Francisco (“the City”)
15 has implemented various iterations of a Shelter in Place order, requiring individuals and
16 families to practice social distancing and stay at home as much as possible to limit the spread
17 of the virus; and

18 WHEREAS, The State of California followed suit on March 19, 2020, and both the City
19 and State are currently undergoing a phased reopening, which however is not anticipated to
20 result in an end to Shelter in Place restrictions for a significant period of time; and

21 WHEREAS, The successive orders have resulted in the closing of all schools, many
22 daycare programs, and many after-school and community based programs serving youth in
23 San Francisco; and

24 WHEREAS, According to the United States Census Bureau, 13.4 percent of the
25 population of San Francisco are persons under 18 years of age; and

1 WHEREAS, The youth population of San Francisco includes all of these persons as
2 well as Transitional Age Youth, aged 18 through 25, who are not counted as a separate
3 category in population surveys; and

4 WHEREAS, While the federal government of the United States (“US”) has passed
5 legislation to send stimulus checks of up to \$1,200 to most US taxpayers, most
6 undocumented immigrants will not receive this economic support; and

7 WHEREAS, Undocumented youth, and the children of undocumented parents, will
8 therefore not receive the same level of economic support from the federal government as
9 other youth and their families; and

10 WHEREAS, The effects of the pandemic, both in terms of public health and in terms of
11 economic impact, have been felt hardest in historically and currently underserved
12 communities, specifically Black, Indigenous and Latinx communities, with the highest
13 concentrations of cases in the Japantown, Tenderloin, South of Market, Mission, Potrero Hill,
14 Bayview Hunter’s Points, Excelsior and Outer Mission neighborhoods as of June 12, 2020;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Furthermore, youth who are currently unsheltered, unhoused, and/or
17 incarcerated are especially vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus due to those circumstances; and

18 WHEREAS, According to data from Larkin Street Youth Services (“Larkin”), one of the
19 City’s main service providers for youth experiencing homelessness, as of June 12, 2020,
20 COVID-19 and the Shelter in Place Order have had significant impacts on the provision of
21 services for youth experiencing homelessness; and

22 WHEREAS, Notably, Larkin has seen an increase in incident reports related to mental
23 health, suicide ideation, and challenging behaviors related to substance use and mental
24 health symptoms among clients, and a 66% increase in monthly referrals to their behavioral
25 health team; and

1 WHEREAS, Larkin reports that while the number of drop-ins has remained consistent
2 through the progression of the pandemic and implementation of the Shelter in Place Order,
3 the corresponding needs are heightened, including but not limited to showers and services for
4 stress and anxiety; and

5 WHEREAS, Larkin reports that about 40% of their housed clients have either lost a job
6 (1/3 of those impacted) or lost hours (2/3 of those impacted), that having limited staff due to
7 the current situation hinders their capacity to provide in person one-on-one employment
8 services to clients, and that clients having inconsistent contact information due to difficulties in
9 compliance with the Shelter in Place Order makes it difficult to contact Office of Economic and
10 Workforce Development/Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act clients for follow up and
11 employment status; and

12 WHEREAS, Shelter capacity is reduced due to the necessity of social distancing, with
13 Larkin’s Diamond Youth Shelter at 50% capacity and Lark-Inn at 25% occupancy, along with a
14 dramatic increase in the number of clients housed through emergency housing vouchers; and

15 WHEREAS, Additionally, the incarcerated population is currently at greater risk of
16 contracting COVID-19, as City, State and Federal leaders have not made or been slow to
17 make significant adjustments, including closing jails and prisons, to allow for social distancing;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, The youth population is now cut off both from in-person interaction with
20 support systems such as friends and colleagues, and from in-person educational and
21 recreational resources that are usually available to youth; and

22 WHEREAS, Not all schools were able to promptly switch to at-distance learning,
23 meaning that youth were not interacting on a regular basis with their teachers and peers, even
24 in virtual spaces; and

25

1 WHEREAS, Many students are disadvantaged by the Shelter in Place Order, such as
2 those who may not be able to graduate school on time, those struggling with online school as
3 a learning medium, and those do not have access to virtual devices; and

4 WHEREAS, Additionally, some youth, especially LGBTQ+ youth and victims of
5 domestic violence, may not be in a safe environment when confined to their homes; and

6 WHEREAS, Various hotlines for victims of domestic abuse and violence in San
7 Francisco, such as the Asian Women’s Shelter and WOMAN., Inc, have seen an increase in
8 calls since the implementation of the Shelter in Place Order, following a nationwide trend
9 showing that as of April 6, 2020, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has received well
10 over 2,000 calls in which COVID-19 was cited as a condition of abuse; and

11 WHEREAS, The Department of Children Youth and their Families (“DCYF”), which
12 contracts outside organizations as service providers for educational and recreational services
13 and programs for youth and families in San Francisco, currently funds approximately 446
14 programs; and

15 WHEREAS, As of April 1, 2020, 11 of those programs remained open and 125
16 programs were operating remotely, for a total of only 136, that is 30 percent, of programs
17 continuing to serve youth; and

18 WHEREAS, According to a Service Providers Working Group survey of 28 programs
19 from 27 unique agencies providing a broad range of services funded by DCYF published on
20 April 15, 2020, 67.9% of the 28 programs had reduced direct service programming, while
21 21.4% had somewhat reduced direct service programming; and

22 WHEREAS, According to the same survey, 51.9% of 27 agencies reported incurring
23 increased, unexpected costs due to COVID-19, related to the costs of working from home,
24 additional cleaning, acquiring personal protective equipment, or providing emergency support
25 for clients; and

1 WHEREAS, While DCYF is providing trainings for their service providers on how to
2 implement at-distance learning, it is clear that the department and its service providers are so
3 far unable to maintain the same level of service provision during this time of uncertainty for
4 youth, workers, and the City; and

5 WHEREAS, On March 31, 2020, the City Controller, Mayor’s Budget Director, and
6 Board of Supervisors Budget and Legislative Analyst released a Joint Budget Outlook Update
7 Report estimating a combined budget shortfall of between \$1.1 billion and \$1.7 billion over the
8 next two fiscal years (FY 2020-2021 and FY 2021-2022), including losses compared to
9 estimated revenue during the remaining span of the current fiscal year (FY 2019-2020); and

10 WHEREAS, The Mayor has requested that departments cut their budgets by 10% in
11 FY 2020-2021 with an additional 5% contingency cut in FY 2021-2022 to offset revenue loss
12 and balance the budget as required by law; and

13 WHEREAS, However, it is just as clear that the need for at-distance programs that
14 engage youth on an educational as well as recreational basis has never been higher; and

15 WHEREAS, A survey of United Kingdom (“UK”) youth, who have been under
16 comparable restrictions as San Francisco youth, by the UK youth mental health charity Young
17 Minds showed that 83 percent of respondents agreed that the coronavirus pandemic had
18 made their mental health worse, with 32 percent saying it had made their mental health “much
19 worse”; and

20 WHEREAS, The same survey, which was conducted between March 20, 2020, the day
21 on which UK schools closed to most students, and March 25, 2020, when further restrictive
22 measures had been put in place in the UK, also showed that 66 percent of respondents
23 agreed that watching or reading the news was unhelpful for their mental health; and

24 WHEREAS, Anecdotal evidence Youth Commissioners have heard from friends,
25 contacts, and constituents paints a similar picture among San Francisco youth; and

1 WHEREAS, While continuing to aggressively respond to the ongoing public health
2 crisis, the City still has an obligation to serve the unmet needs of San Francisco youth,
3 especially given the direct negative impact on the social, mental, and economic wellbeing of
4 San Francisco youth this crisis has caused; and

5 WHEREAS, The City should not leave youth to solve these issues on their own, but
6 should systematically treat the preservation their social, mental, and economic wellbeing as a
7 key part of its response to the state of emergency it is currently in; and

8 WHEREAS, On the other hand, there are many programs currently in the City's budget,
9 enumerated below, which either fail to serve a meaningful purpose, or even directly harm the
10 wellbeing of San Francisco youth; and

11 WHEREAS, While the Youth Commission recognizes that balancing the budget in this
12 time of crisis and increased need will be a difficult task, it will also be a measure of the City's
13 values in the choices made to preserve or eliminate youth services and programs; and

14 WHEREAS, The Mayor and President of the Board of Supervisors have convened a
15 COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force to elaborate solutions to the socioeconomic crisis
16 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

17 WHEREAS, It is also a measure of the City's values the extent to which City leaders
18 solicit and listen to the input of young people in shaping how the City responds to this
19 economic crisis; and

20 WHEREAS, The City should not let San Francisco's youth pay for this crisis, either in
21 their health, both physical and mental, or in their economic futures, or in their ability to make
22 themselves heard when they are at their most vulnerable; now, therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission declares and affirms its full support for the
24 local and statewide Shelter in Place and Stay at Home Orders as necessary to save lives,
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1 especially of vulnerable populations such as seniors and those with underlying conditions;
2 and, be it

3 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and Board of
4 Supervisors to direct departments serving youth to increase at-distance programming for
5 youth—educational and recreational—for the duration of the Shelter in Place Order, with the
6 object of making such programming accessible to all youth in San Francisco; and, be it

7 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Board of Education of
8 the San Francisco Unified School District (“SFUSD”) and the Board of Trustees of City
9 College of San Francisco (“CCSF”) to provide educational assistance for students who are at
10 placed at a disadvantage by the Shelter in Place Order, such as those who may not graduate
11 on time, those struggling with online school as a learning medium, and those do not have
12 access to virtual devices; and, be it

13 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the Mayor and Board of
14 Supervisors to not cut funding for youth-oriented services and programs in response to the
15 current budget shortfall; and, be it

16 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the City, SFUSD, and
17 CCSF to center the needs of Black communities, in particular those of Black youth, to not cut
18 programs and funding that serve those communities, and to increase funding for ethnic
19 studies programs and restorative practice programs in schools, especially for communities
20 experiencing disproportionate rates of violence and/or trauma; and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission recommends that the Mayor and
22 Board of Supervisors instead enact immediate cost-saving measures by permanently closing
23 the Youth Guidance Center and County Jail Number 4, freezing planned increases in the
24 number of sworn peace officers employed by City departments, halting the purchase of
25 additional law enforcement equipment, eliminating law enforcement personnel and equipment

1 from SFMTA fare enforcement and homelessness response protocols, and otherwise
2 reconsidering the portion of the City’s budget devoted to policing; and, be it

3 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission requests that one or more
4 representative(s) of the Commission, to be designated by an internal process, be appointed to
5 all committees, advisory bodies, and taskforces created to make recommendations and take
6 action directing the City’s response to the economic and social effects of the COVID-19
7 pandemic, and that such representative(s) have all the same powers and duties of other
8 members of such committees, advisory bodies, and taskforces; and, be it

9 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges SFUSD and CCSF to
10 prioritize youth leadership in co-designing and co-shaping fall school reopening plans, and to
11 ensure that schools do not reopen until all communities are safe, and schools are equipped
12 with health and hygiene measures, masks, sanitization, and proper social distancing
13 protocols; and, be it

14 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the City to provide logistical
15 and financial aid to outside non-profit organizations providing assistance to undocumented
16 workers who do not qualify for federal assistance and their families; and, be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the City to immediately
18 house all youth experiencing homelessness in a dignified manner and release all remaining
19 incarcerated youth into their communities, making sure that all released youth receive full
20 reentry support and services; and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the City to work with
22 community based organizations that work with unhoused youth and youth experiencing
23 homelessness, especially service providers, to meet the increased needs both of those youth
24 and of service providers, particularly with respect to mental health services and shelter; and,
25 be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the City to provide
2 increased resources for youth who may not be safe at home, especially victims of domestic
3 abuse and violence, in the form of remote counseling, guidance, and support to move into a
4 safe environment if necessary; and, be it

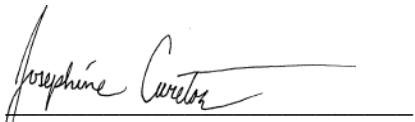
5 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the City to increase
6 resources for pandemic response in marginalized communities, that have been and are most
7 impacted by COVID-19, notably Black and Indigenous communities; and, be it

8 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Youth Commission urges the City to maintain
9 consistency across all services and programs made available to youth for the duration of the
10 Shelter in Place Order as well as when the City is able to transition back to normal operating
11 conditions.

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Josephine Cureton, Chair
Adopted on June 15, 2020
2019-2020 San Francisco Youth Commission

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