

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND HILDA SOLIS

AUGUST 22, 2017

SUPPORTING THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION OF FOSTER YOUTH TO ADULTHOOD

The Board of Supervisors is dedicated to addressing the most compelling issues facing county residents – the crisis in housing and homelessness; the provision of adequate health and mental health services; improving workforce development; and enhancing child safety and welfare. Recently, the Board has memorialized its commitment through various initiatives and priorities under the Chief Executive Officer. When it comes to outcomes for transitional-aged foster youth (TAY), there is a compelling link among these board priorities because upon emancipation, many foster youth (including both DCFS-supervised and probation-supervised foster youth) find themselves unable to achieve their academic goals, facing unemployment and/or homelessness, dealing with teen pregnancy and parenting, or unaware of their available access to healthcare.

Policy makers, advocates, and community stakeholders agree that self-sufficiency efforts must begin as a child enters the system and that all relevant county departments and community partners must have a clear mission relative to the role each plays in the life of that child. Over the years, the Board of Supervisors has enacted a series of motions directing the Chief Executive Officer and county departments to address various concerns related to the needs of these youth.

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Most significant are the Board actions that established youth self-sufficiency as a countywide goal; the development of a comprehensive integrated service delivery plan to serve TAY populations that coordinates efforts including Management Appraisal and Performance Plan (MAPP) goals for all relevant county department directors; and the involvement of the Office of Child Protection with existing implementation plans and newly proposed goals.

In addition, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection issued complementary recommendations that support the self-sufficiency of foster youth such as joint strategic planning, improved data sharing, improved educational stability, and expanded mental health services.

As with any vulnerable population, we have learned that individual departments cannot effectively serve a child in isolation. More than just identifying initiatives and goals with community support, we need to seek a culture change countywide to integrate support for self-sufficiency of foster youth throughout all county services – from pregnancy prevention to mental health services; from educational attainment to career development, and stable housing programs.

The Board of Supervisors must take advantage of the opportunity to integrate these positive changes across County departments, in partnership with community stakeholders, with greater accountability. Significantly improved coordination, coupled with better integration of resources, will improve services for our foster youth and help them achieve successful self-sufficiency. Furthermore, an integrated multi-year countywide effort will enable the development of key data points by which to track outcomes.

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WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Office (CEO) in conjunction with the Office of Child Protection, to coordinate with all relevant County departments including the Health Services Agency (including Mental Health, Public Health, and Health); Public Social Services; Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services; Office of Education; Probation; and Children and Family Services; and with input from key stakeholders (such as legal advocates, judicial officers, TAY service providers, housing providers, educational program advocates and providers, workforce development programs, philanthropic community, relevant commissions, and others) to coalesce existing efforts as the basis for a cohesive multi-year countywide strategy that will support the self-sufficiency goals of transitional aged foster youth at the earliest stage possible.

Specifically, this should include:

- Identification of all existing programs, services, funding streams and working groups that serve transitional aged youth/ AB 12 youth (including any shortfalls or gaps in services or ineffective programs, as well as any successful initiatives for consideration of full implementation);
- Involvement and input of senior level staff within each relevant county department (and across department divisions), along with key internal and external stakeholders and advocates;
- Identification of lead departments for each goal and objective, which will serve as the basis for ongoing Management Appraisal and Performance Goals (MAPP) for department directors until the plan is implemented and fully-operational; and.
- Data indicators (including base data and anticipated outcomes) and strategies for evaluation of implementation efforts.

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The first report back to the Board on the proposed countywide strategy should be completed by the Office of Child Protection and the CEO within six months verbally and in writing. Beyond that, annual reports on milestones and accomplishments should be submitted in writing by the Office of Child Protection in consultation with the CEO, until implementation is complete.

2. Direct the CEO's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations staff to amend the County's legislative agenda to support Federal and State legislation that provides for successful self-sufficiency of foster youth. Furthermore, existing legislation designed to best serve this population should be sufficiently integrated into the policy and practice of all relevant county departments and with input from key stakeholders.
3. Request that the Office of Child Protection and the CEO identify existing community projects related to transitional aged foster youth and engage the philanthropic community and other community partners that currently have projects, resources and services in place. This should also include any appropriate county departments to help maximize resources to coordinate, integrate and develop promising pilot programs that will address the housing, employment, educational and social and emotional needs of this population and provide access to existing high-quality community programs.
 - Existing programs and any proposed pilot programs should identify data indicators of positive outcomes through a program evaluation component, for purposes of the County's determination to take these programs to full-scale.
 - The Office of Child Protection should report back to the Board in writing in six months on these efforts.

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