

To whom this may concern,

My name is Lorena Quinones (MSW). I have been employed with Southern California Crossroads for two years as a clinical case manager for the Ready to Rise program. Through this journey, I have witnessed how this program has made a positive impact not only in the life's of individuals but also within families and in the communities we serve.

Through my experience working with youth I have seen the severe trauma our youth have faced. This program is essential because it opens the doors to youth who have been rejected, labelled and oppressed far too many times. I believe this program should be fully funded because it gives youth a second chance for positive youth development and allows them to embrace resiliency. For example, one of my clients was in the foster care system at a young age due to her mother's substance abuse problem. While she was in the foster care system she suffered severe trauma and was constantly battling with the need to belong. She was a victim of community violence when she was shot while walking home from school. She is now in recovery and is doing very well. During our first few sessions she appeared withdrawn and was experiencing depressive symptoms. However, throughout our sessions she became engaged, receptive and allowed me into her life. She has now developed positive coping skills such as exercising and her passion for music. She was recently approved to work for Los Angeles County Parks and Recreational youth program and will begin orientation in two weeks. I strongly believe Ready to Rise has been the key factor in preventing my client from becoming a product of her environment. Ready to Rise has given my client tremendous resiliency and devotion to thrive despite all challenges.

I have witnessed the extreme need for mental health services. There will be many negative impacts if Ready to Rise is not fully funded. Our youth are broken and crying out for help. Without this positive youth development program our youth will engage in self -medicating to help cope and cover those wounds that Ready to Rise can help heal. It will not only affect individuals, families but also the communities we serve. Underserve communities would be negatively impacted especially during these tough times of global pandemic. It is our responsibility to invest in the environment and communities to take action and give people hope for a better tomorrow.