



March 30, 2020

TO:

London Breed, Mayor, City and County of San Francisco  
Libby Schaaf, Mayor, City of Oakland  
Sam Liccardo, Mayor, City of San José

Board of Supervisors in Alameda County:

Scott Haggerty, Alameda County Supervisor, Dist. 1  
Richard Valle, Alameda County Supervisor, Dist. 2  
Wilma Chan, Alameda County Supervisor, Dist. 3  
Nate Miley, Alameda County Supervisor, Dist. 4  
Keith Carson, Alameda County Supervisor, Dist. 5

Board of Supervisors in Santa Clara County:

Mike Wasserman, Santa Clara County Supervisor, Dist. 1  
Cindy Chavez, Santa Clara County Supervisor, Dist. 2  
Dave Cortese, Santa Clara County Supervisor, Dist. 3  
Susan Ellenberg, Santa Clara County Supervisor, Dist. 4  
Joe Simitian, Santa Clara County Supervisor, Dist. 5

Board of Supervisors in San Francisco County:

Sandra Lee Fewer, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 1  
Catherine Stefani, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 2  
Aaron Peskin, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 3  
Gordon Mar, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 4  
Dean Preston, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 5  
Matt Haney, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 6  
Norman Yee, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 7  
Rafael Mandelman, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 8  
Hillary Ronen, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 9  
Shamann Walton, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 10  
Ahsha Safaí, San Francisco Supervisor, Dist. 11

**The health and safety of all young people must be an immediate priority.**

As people who have been directly impacted, and advocates and leaders working directly with systems impacted young people, we call on Bay Area city and county leaders to take immediate action to protect the health and safety of justice- and systems-involved youth as you take measures to address the spread of COVID-19.

Everyone deserves to have their basic human needs met during this crisis. Those of us who carry the additional burden of being harmed by the criminal justice and other systems are most at risk from the immediate and lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While we support the measures to curb this pandemic, we also know that shelter in place is particularly difficult for women, girls, trans and GNC people and our families and communities. Many of us must fend for ourselves, are the primary caregivers of our families, are already isolated, face health challenges that put us at risk, and will be hardest hit by the economic fallout. We must have reassurance that our most vulnerable who already struggle with a lack of resources and secure places to shelter, are taken care of and provided for.

We have done an initial assessment with our young people and communities we serve and the need is immediate and urgent. It is critical that cities and counties in the Bay Area not only take action now, but be bold and innovative in our solutions. We call on San Francisco, Alameda and Santa Clara Counties to incorporate the following actions into your coordinated response to this public health crisis:

**1. Bring our young people home.**

We call for the immediate release of incarcerated young people, including girls, young women, trans and gender nonconforming people. If schools are not safe for our young people, neither are prisons. Public health officials have made it clear that prisons and jails are inhumane and dangerous places during a viral pandemic, and several jurisdictions are taking steps to release people from adult jails and prisons. This is doubly true for our young people who cannot receive visits from their families and loved ones during this time.

There is widespread agreement among public health experts and human rights advocates that the population of youth in custody needs to be drastically reduced to reduce coronavirus risk and protect the mental and physical safety of young people. This means the release of youth in custody needs to be expedited and new admission to juvenile detention and correctional facilities be halted.

- All youth who are not a threat to the safety of our communities should be released, and those who are wards of the court must get safe shelter.
- Stop any arrest or detention for probation violations.
- Ensure the highest level of public health precautions are in place for all of those who remain inside: access to soap, frequent showers, laundry, and extra cleaning by facility of shared spaces. These supplies and services should be provided frequently to prevent illness.
- Redirect funds that would otherwise be spent detaining a young person - up to \$500,000 a year in some jurisdictions – to the young person and their families so they can have secure and safe shelter (if they don't already have it), take care of basic necessities and focus on being safe and in compliance with probation.

**2. Establish a no-arrest order for low-level, non-violent and survival violations.**

The shelter in place orders must not be used as an opportunity to further harm young people, particularly Black and Brown youth, through excessive use of law enforcement.

- Police should be ordered not to make arrests unless for imminent danger or violence.
- Youth who have been stopped for citationable and misdemeanor infractions should be driven home.

- Those stopped for “survival violations” -- loitering, pandering, soliciting, prostitution -- should be brought to a safe place and connected to resources if they do not have a safe place.
- Those stopped for “shelter in place” violations should not be issued citations or targeted for “violation of probation”. Instead they should be given information, asked if they have a safe place and connected to any resources they may need.
- No citations should be given for public transit fare evasion. If public transportation has not been deemed free for all county residents, youth should be allowed to ride free.
- No school attendance penalties for youth on probation now that schools are shut down.
- Youth on probation that have at least two-thirds of the total credits to graduate from high school should be released from probation.

3. **Issue a countywide emergency plan to ensure that transitional age youth (TAY) immediately receive the housing, food & cash aid they need to weather this crisis.**

Young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are in transition from state custody or foster care are particularly at-risk at this time. Many don't have safe, consistent shelter or people to make sure their basic needs are met. There are no food programs easily accessible to them, such as the programs that have been set up for school-age children, and they face significant barriers to finding and keeping living wage work. Just as the needs of youth under 16 are being prioritized, so should transitional age youth's needs be prioritized.

4. **Ensure that young parents have the support they need to be safe and care for and educate their children, including:**

- Mandate that CalWorks “stop the clock” and waive the work/school requirements for parents to receive cash aid.
- Parents should be exempt from CalWorks penalties, especially those with children who have compromised immune systems.
- Provide adequate and substantial meals via school district satellite lunch programs, not just snacks.
- Implement a rent freeze for all residents, particularly public housing. We are ALL impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic. A rent freeze will help families make the hard decision to stay home from work if they are sick and a parent.
- Work with utility companies to ensure all utilities are kept on, and freeze all past due and current payments.
- Provide families without safe or consistent shelter with safe shelter options, including but not limited to: placing families and TAY youth in unused housing and Air BnB units, in hotels using vouchers, and/or in student dorms & housing.

- Free internet and vouchers for parents to ensure that they have the technology required for their children to participate in distance learning, including computers.

The closure of schools, and the shutdown of economic activity, has significantly curtailed the ability for young and single parents to work. Because Governor Newsom has indicated that schools could remain closed for the remainder of the school year, it is imperative that families have the immediate and ongoing aid and infrastructure they need to keep their children healthy, educated and well cared for so they can continue to work if they are able.

## **5. Immediately reduce the population of county jails NOW**

Lastly, we stand in solidarity with our criminal justice partners statewide who are tirelessly advocating for our loved ones inside county jails. As information comes in about medical & jail personnel contracting COVID-19, we demand that sheriffs, judges, district attorneys, public defenders, and elected officials urgently work together to:

- Release all those waiting for pretrial hearings by expediting proceedings IMMEDIATELY.
- Release anyone on technical or stand-alone probation or parole IMMEDIATELY.
- No new jail staff or correctional officers. More staff means more exposure to outside contamination during this pandemic.
- Provide additional hygiene items to individuals. As long as the commissary is closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, additional soap, deodorant, toothpaste, anti-fungal cream and laundry service is imperative.
- Allow teleconferencing for those who are not released to access family members and attorneys during a global pandemic.
- Provide CDC approved education on hygiene and proper cleaning procedures to all staff and trustees.
- Require facilities staff follow all CDC guidelines for keeping facilities clean.

Young Women's Freedom Center & the Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition, representing our members and communities we work with, are ready and willing to partner, meet with officials, & contribute our expertise to developing immediate plans and policies to support young people most at risk during this crisis. We have already begun working to ensure that youth have access to the internet at home, covering the costs ourselves, and have raised additional private funding to ensure access to laptops so they can do schoolwork, engage in support groups, receive one-on-one support, & continue in on-the-job training and employment support.

We hope that the model we have developed as grassroots community organizations working in partnership and on behalf of young people most isolated can be adopted and supported by the city and counties in which these young folks and their families live.

The current pandemic and its response make dismantling harmful systems and replacing them with community-led care more urgent and necessary. We are ready and willing to partner and work with elected and institutional leaders to co-develop innovative plans that support our communities.

Given the ever-accelerating impact of this crisis, we call on you to take urgent action. Please respond to this request in writing and/or through a webinar or meeting with our organizations immediately. You can reach us through email at [krea@youngwomenfree.org](mailto:krea@youngwomenfree.org) and [jessica@youngwomenfree.org](mailto:jessica@youngwomenfree.org).

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Young Women's Freedom Center and the undersigned organizations

**Statewide**

Alliance for Boys and Men of Color

All of Us or None

California Coalition for Women Prisoners

The Justice Teams Network

**San Jose**

Blue Stars Admissions Consulting

De-bug Silicon Valley

Community Agency for Resource, Advocacy & Services

Youth Outreach and Learning Institute

Youth Alliance

Johnathan Gomez, SJSU Chicana/o Studies Dept

**Alameda County**

Alliance for Girls

Restore Oakland

Anti Police-Terror Project

Because Black is Beautiful

The Body Positive

The Center for Cultural Power

Centro Legal de la Raza

Communities United for Restoring Youth Justice

East Bay Community Law Center

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

Freedom for Immigrants

National Center for Youth Law

Mamacitas Cafe

Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth

Reuniting Families

The Unity Council

Urban Peace Movement

**San Francisco**

Alliance for Girls

Bay Area Community Resources

BMAGIC

Community Works

LYRIC

Mission Peace Collaborative

Mo' MAGIC

National Lawyers Guild - SFBA

Roadmap to Peace

San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness

San Francisco Public Defenders Office

St. James Infirmary

Transgender Gender-variant & Intersex Justice Project

The Women's Building of San Francisco

Young Community Developers