



August 17, 2020

Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Clara
70 W. Hedding Street - 10th Floor, East Wing
San José, CA 95110

Dear President Chavez and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

As the Board continues its hearings on the recommended County budget, the Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits (SVCN) is grateful to see \$2 million in funding for inventory items for nonprofits. This funding will enable effective organizations to provide critical services and programs during these challenging times.

We are also appreciative of the collaborative spirit of the Community-Based Initiative and other efforts from the Office of the County Executive (OCE) to strengthen communication and alignment between the County and its nonprofit partners. However, with the onset of the pandemic, communication has understandably faded as a result of nonprofits and the County worked overtime to address the fallout from the pandemic and, partially, due to leadership changes in the contracting office. For weeks, SVCN has tried to gather information to prepare the sector about the County budget and possible cost-saving actions the County may take to close the budget deficit. Information has been scant, trickling out at best, a departure from the movement towards dialogue that we'd experienced prior to the pandemic. We understand that some of this information gap results from the County itself scrambling to respond to a lack of information — and help — coming from the state and federal government.

However, as we expressed in our last letter to the Board, it's important that the County bring to the table nonprofits as partners and engage them in a conversation about how to handle the enormous budget shortfall, how to preserve critical safety net services to our communities in need, and how to get meaningful input from the community about budget priorities — regardless of the ongoing revenue uncertainties.

It was therefore incredibly disappointing to see a number of reductions and eliminations proposed in the Social Services Administration (SSA) and Behavioral Health budgets without advance notice to the nonprofits affected, without consultation with SVCN or other nonprofit representatives, without meaningful transparency into the Administration's rationale behind its budget reduction strategies, and without meaningful input from the community about budget priorities, including whether and to what degree safety-net services should be prioritized for



preservation. The affected nonprofits weren't consulted or informed about the potential changes to their contracts, and only learned of them via budget memoranda attached to the August 19 Board of Supervisors agenda or through notification from SVCN.

To that end, we respectfully request that moving forward, the OCE and departments work with nonprofit partners at the table to craft shared strategies and solutions throughout the course of the budget process. As the County's partners in so many of the programs and services that improve the lives of County residents, including our safety net, we stand ready to bring our expertise and passion to the table to strategize together about how to preserve our safety net so that we can continue to protect and enhance the lives and well-being of folks in disadvantaged communities. Today we have conveyed these requests directly to OCE and SSA.

SVCN and its nonprofit members and partners understand that we must share in the pain and want to work with County leaders to find creative solutions to the unprecedented resource challenges we face together. We look forward to working with you through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy L. Ho". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy L. Ho

Chief Strategy and Policy Officer

cc:

Behavioral Health Contractors Association
Community Health Partnership