



January 4, 2021

Council President Jennifer Campbell  
San Diego City Council  
202 "C" Street, 10th Floor  
San Diego, CA 92101

**Subject: Recommendations for Councilmember Budget Priority Memoranda for FY 2022**

Dear Honorable Council President Campbell and Councilmembers,

On behalf of The San Diego LGBT Community Center (The Center), whose mission is to enhance and sustain the health and well-being of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, nonbinary, immigrant, and HIV communities to the betterment of our entire San Diego region, I am writing to share recommendations for your Budget Priority Memoranda for FY 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the existing inequities in our communities, and as a health and human service provider we see these inequities the most in housing, behavioral health, public safety, and access to services. Previous policy decisions have created systems where the LGBTQ community, low-wage workers, immigrants, communities of color, as well as unsheltered and incarcerated individuals, are being hit hardest by the pandemic.

Specifically, the LGBTQ community has disproportionately felt the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; a recent national poll showed that 66% of LGBTQ households have had a serious financial problem paying their rent, utilities, affording medical care, and paying their loans or other debt, 64% of LGBTQ households experienced employment loss, and 38% of LGBTQ households have been unable to get medical care or delayed getting medical care.<sup>i</sup>

The Center recognizes the deficit that the City of San Diego is facing this budget cycle and the challenges that creates; **The Center strongly urges bold leadership in reimagining the budget in order to create an equitable balanced budget.** The Center's budget priorities include:

- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program:** Ensure funding for the Public Services portion of CDBG is not removed or redirected, which has been the case for several recent budget cycles. Continuing to underfund the Public Services portion of CDBG funds will have large negative effects, compounded this year due to the pandemic, on community non-profits and service provider's ability to provide critical services to communities in need.
- **Rental Relief:** Invest an additional \$50,000,000 in rental assistance for all San Diegans, regardless of immigration status.<sup>ii</sup> As eviction protections granted to tenants by the state in AB3088 are set to expire in February 2021, this investment is critical to staving off a wave of evictions during a public health crisis.
- **Housing Education & Access:** Allocate \$5,000,000 annually for Community Based Organizations to conduct housing education, counseling, provide services and/or referrals, and outreach to tenants and landlords in every community and in languages with over 3% representation in San Diego to ensure all residents are

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aware of new assistance programs that they might be eligible for, and new policies affecting their tenant and housing rights.<sup>iii</sup>

- **Public Safety:** Reimagine public safety and redirect ineffectively allocated police funds, such as the Street Gang Unit (\$10.4 million), Gang Intervention Unit (\$6.4 million), and Overtime (\$38.1 million) budgets, to invest in alternatives to policing, including but not limited to:
  - o Diversify and strengthen City alternatives to police, such as community investments, non-law enforcement trauma-informed first responders, and decriminalization of low-level and non-violent drug offenses.
  - o Develop and fund a pilot program for three to five Community Based Organizations to develop programs that provide trauma-informed first responders, instead of law enforcement, to local emergencies, and will include de-escalation and harm reduction techniques, for situations including, but not limited to:
    - Public Health Crises
    - People Experiencing Homelessness
    - Mental Health Crises
    - Intimate Partner Violence
    - Community Violence
    - Substance Use
    - Natural Disasters
- **Equitable Budget:** Prioritize resource investment in communities historically under-resourced, and prioritize budget cuts throughout City departments and programs aimed at sheltering these same communities from being negatively impacted. San Diego is home to large disparities of wealth, resources and services throughout the nine council districts, and communities within them. This year's budget will require reductions at all levels, and those reductions will not be felt equally among San Diego's residents. It is our collective responsibility to work to create not an equal budget, but an equitable one.

Thank you for your consideration of The San Diego LGBT Community Center's budget priorities for FY 2022.

Sincerely,



Caroline (Cara) Dessert, Esq. [she/her/hers]

Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>i</sup> *The Disproportionate Impacts of COVID-19 on LGBTQ Households in the U.S.*, Movement Advancement Project, July/August 2020, <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/2020-covid-lgbtq-households-report.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> This is also a budget priority of the Community Budget Alliance, of which The Center is a member.

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