

December 23, 2022

Council President Sean Elo-Rivera and Members of the City Council
City of San Diego
202 "C" Street, 10th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

Subject: Recommendations for Councilmember Budget Priority Memoranda for FY 2023

Honorable Council President Elo-Rivera 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 2023.

On December 14th, 2021, the City Council voted to extend the continued State of Local Emergency in the City of San Diego in response to COVID-19. As the City of San Diego works to approve its now 3rd fiscal year budget since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this process has underscored the need to continue providing supportive services to its residence who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

As a health and human service provider we see these inequities the most amongst LGBTQ community, low-wage workers, immigrants, communities of color, as well as unsheltered and incarcerated individuals. Additionally, we have heard their increase in needs when it comes to housing, behavioral health, public safety, and access to City services.

The Center recognizes that although APRA funds are available to offset the projected budget shortfalls over the coming years, including a \$66.8 Million deficit in FY23, there is an uncertainty as to when full economic recovery will be achieved. With an acknowledgement of the uncertainty around COVID-19, the rise and persistence of inflation and the magnitude and potential impacts from supply chain constraints, The Center strongly urges bold leadership in reimagining the budget to create an equitable and balanced budget. The Center believes that budgets are moral documents and therefore requests that you consider the following budget priorities:

- **Diversify and Strengthen Alternatives to SDPD:** SDPD's budget represents one-third of the General Fund and limits the services that would otherwise be available to San Diego residents for critical needs like housing and mental health services. Recommended changes include but not limited to:
 - Dismantle the Street Gang and Gang Intervention units, now called the "Special Operations Unit" and reallocate the \$16.8M towards community care such as the Youth Care & Development Program.
 - Divest \$10M from the SDPD overtime budget and use funds towards providing additional critical services to City residents.
 - Allocate \$5M annually for Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to conduct community education, provide referrals, and outreach to residents in every community and in languages with over 3% representation in San Diego, to ensure all residents are aware of Mobile Crisis Response Teams which provides police alternatives to those experiencing mental health or substance abuse crises.
 - Decriminalize low-level and non-violent drug offenses.



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& transgender
community of
San Diego County
since 1972.

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- **Housing and Homelessness Solutions:**
 - Create a Housing Stability Fund¹: Allocate \$24M that would be distributed through CBOs to provide short-term rent relief grants, security deposit assistance to help individuals secure permanent housing, or assistance payments for individuals needing to transition into new housing due to eviction and/or their financial situation.
 - Allocate \$2M annually to create additional LGBTQ affirming shelter beds and wrap-around services through the San Diego Housing Commission. Of the youth currently experiencing homelessness, 40% identify as part of the LGBTQ community yet in the entire City there are only four shelter beds specifically serving the LGBTQ community.²
- **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.

Thank you for your consideration of The San Diego LGBT Community Center's budget priorities for FY 2023.

Sincerely,

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¹ This is also a budget priority of the Community Budget Alliance, of which The Center is a member.

² The Center currently operates Project Safe STAY, a four-bed overnight shelter for LGBTQ youth with an annual cost of \$350,000.