

August 28, 2017

Supervisor John Gioia
Supervisor Candace Andersen
Supervisor Diane Burgis
Supervisor Karen Mitchoff
Supervisor Federal Glover
659 Pine Street,
Martinez, CA 94553

RE: First 5 Contra Costa support for the creation of Stand Together CoCo

To the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors:

As Executive Director of First 5 Contra Costa, I respectfully request that you establish *Stand Together CoCo*, a rapid response and community education project to support safety and justice for immigrant families in Contra Costa.

Nearly half of all children in Contra Costa County have at least one immigrant parent. In recent months, local families have stopped accessing benefits like food stamps and health care for their children, pulled children from school, and are living in a heightened state of stress and fear.

Children should not live in constant fear their parents will be taken away at any moment, or be further traumatized when a loving parent is deported. In most cases, it is the primary breadwinner who is deported, leaving hard-working families suddenly thrust into deep poverty, instability, or homelessness. The traumatic stress caused by family instability or economic hardship harms children. It can physically change how a young child's brain develops and influence children's long-term development, health, and learning.

The Stand Together CoCo pilot won't change federal policies – but it can provide reassurance and support to families who are threatened daily by these policies. Families need reliable, trustworthy information, access to legal aid, information about their Constitutional rights, and immediate support if a parent is detained or deported.

Stand Together CoCo is an opportunity for Contra Costa County to reduce suffering among young children and to take a stand on the right side of history. All children deserve to have safe, secure childhoods and to get the chance to reach their full potential.

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For the sake of Contra Costa's youngest residents, I urge you to immediately authorize the Office of the Public Defender to establish Stand Together CoCo as a pilot project. By authorizing and funding this project, you will be sending a clear message of leadership, commitment, and compassion to our most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sean Casey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Sean Casey, MSW, MPH
Executive Director

Cc: David Twa, County Administrator
Dr. William Walker, Director of Health Services
Kathy Gallagher, Director of Employment and Human Services