

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: July 27, 2023

From: City Manager Department

Subject: Children and Youth Bill of Rights



Recommended Action: Adopt a resolution adopting the City of Capitola Children and Youth Bill of Rights.

Background: On May 18, 2023, the Capitola City Council directed staff to adopt a Children and Youth Bill of Rights. The City Council identified this objective during the goal-setting workshop and directed Staff to return the item as part of the next fiscal year's budget.

In 2023, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private, national foundation working to improve the well-being of American children and youth, ranked California among the worst for overall child well-being, sitting 35 out of 50 (the AECF collects and publishes most of the data on children in poverty in the U.S. annually). The most recent data (2021) showed that 14% of California households with children sometimes, or often, did not have enough to eat. This figure was even higher for Black and Latino households, at 22%, underscoring the uneven impact on California's children of color. And these challenges affect those in our County as well. In 2019, 27% of children in Santa Cruz County were food insecure but likely ineligible for assistance, and 47% of students were eligible for free and reduced lunch programs.

California ranked poorly in other categories as well – 43rd in economic well-being, 36th in education, and 14th in affordable healthcare. In 2019, 16% of children lived in households below the poverty line. If the poverty line were adjusted to account for the high cost of living in California, the figure would be much worse. In Santa Cruz County, 14% of children live below the poverty line. The percentage goes up to 20% for Latino children.

Furthermore, in 2017-19, 50% of three-and four-year-olds were not in an early education program, which can be crucial for setting children up for success in later life, as well as providing support for parents who are working or going to school. And while California has been a leader in expanding healthcare coverage to all children, from 2018 to 2019, 35,000 more children were found to lack health insurance, for a total of 334,000 minors without coverage in the State.

Over 19% of the Santa Cruz County population is under the age of 18. Some of our community's children and youth experience poverty, food insecurity, substance use, and mental health challenges. Notably, 43% of our teens report using alcohol or drugs, compared to 29% of teens in the State. 31% of 5th, 9th, and 11th graders experience depression.

In 2019, the federal government spent \$408 billion on children, representing about 9 percent of the federal budget. This is consistent with the level of spending on children over the last several years. Under pre-Pandemic law, children's programs are projected to receive only two cents of every dollar of the projected \$1.6 trillion increase in federal spending over the next decade. Furthermore, over the next decade, all categories of spending on children, except health, are projected to decline relative to GDP.

To combat adverse outcomes for children by prioritizing and committing to children's well-being, the State of California and other communities across the State have adopted Children and Youth Bills of Rights, this includes the City of Santa Cruz, whose Council adopted a bill of rights in 2021. The purpose of a Children and Youth Bill of Rights is to ensure that leaders at any level of government keep the needs of young people at the forefront of decisions about budgets and government policies.

Discussion: In line with similar efforts at and across the State, the City of Capitola is committed to supporting the well-being of our youth. The Capitola Children and Youth Bill of Rights will ensure that leaders keep the needs of young people at the forefront of budget and government policy decisions. Children and youth are vulnerable members of our community and must be prioritized and protected.

Children who are differently abled, LGBTQ, non-binary, people of color, undocumented, or from low-income households are especially marginalized. The Bill of Rights provides the foundation that helps our community make children and youth a top priority.

Though based on the work of other communities and organizations, the proposed Bill of Rights is intended to meet the specific needs of the children in the Capitola community.

To measure the effectiveness of this Bill and measure the future success of the City's children and youth initiatives, staff recommends developing metrics aligned with the California Department of Public Health's Health in All Policies, and for the City Council to direct staff to return with an annual report outlining the State of Youth in Capitola. The three pillars of the Health in All Policies – Equity, Health, and Sustainability – are to be reflected throughout the Bill of Rights.

The City of Capitola's activities and programs that support youth in the City and greater community include:

- Recreation Division programming, in particular, Camp Capitola and the Afterschool program
- The Jade Street Park Universally Accessible Playground Project
- The Jade Street Community Center Renovation Project
- Early Childhood and Youth Community Grant Program, which allocated \$60,000 to different community non-profits in Fiscal Year 2022-23 and anticipates the same allocation over the next two fiscal years.
- Partnership with the Youth Action Network

Fiscal Impact: After the passage of Measure J in 2018, the City of Capitola restricted .75% of the transient occupancy tax for Early Youth and Childhood Programming (EYCP) and local business groups. The FY 2023-24 budget for TOT Restricted Revenue allocates \$64,000 to EYCP. Measure J funding will continue being allocated towards these programs, but otherwise, there is no fiscal impact associated with staff's recommended action.

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Capitola Children and Youth Bill of Rights

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