

Youth Justice Reform

Presented by the San Francisco Youth
Commission

What is the Youth Commission?

- Created in 1996 by the San Francisco voters, the Youth Commission is a body of young people who are mandated to advise the Mayor and Board of Supervisors on issues pertaining to young people.
- Previous successes include “Free Muni for Youth”, improving relations between young people on law enforcement, and advocating for 2017 to be declared the “Year of Homeless Youth” by the Board of Supervisors.

Why are we here?

- The Justice and Employment Committee is sponsoring a resolution to address alternatives to incarceration for Transitional Aged Youth, (TAY), and addressing the future of 850 Bryant.
- We would like the Police Commission's support in our endeavors.

Background Context

- 850 Bryant is seismically unfit, and will have to be closed.
- Last December, it was announced that employees would be moving out of the Hall of Justice. This accelerated the timeline in our minds for the closure of 850 Bryant.
- The Youth Commission, and Board of Supervisors have both taken stances against further investments in our county jail system; if we reduce number of people in jail, we can avoid capital expenditures to retrofit/rebuild additional jails.

Key Facts

- Young people are overrepresented in out county jails system by a factor of 3.
- Minority communities are overrepresented as well, specifically the African American community by a factor of 10.
- 85% of people incarcerated in our county jail system are on pretrial, and have been denied, or cannot afford, bail.
- Efforts to enact similar policies in the juvenile justice system have been successful, with a 37% reduction in the daily average incarcerated juvenile population between 2011 to 2015.
- The TAY Collaborative Court, which has had modest success rates, has had to close its doors to new applicants 3 times due to lack of capacity. The District Attorney's office has informed us that even with an investment from DCYF this year to open a second calendar day, that it is expected to reach capacity almost immediately.

What's the Solution?

- Increase funding for programs like the TAY Collaborative Court.
- Reform the Bail Schedule, and continuing “ability to pay” efforts.
- Increase in housing and behavioral health services for Transition Aged Youth.
- Advocate to the District Attorney to restructure how certain non-violent felonies are charged – specifically “snatch and grab” phone thefts. These are offenses which earn strikes, potentially impacting youth people for the rest of their lives.
- Prioritize the development of low-income supportive housing for justice involved young people.

Nationwide Response

- These issues are being debated other states, and municipalities throughout the country.
- June 2016 – The State of Vermont raises the age of criminal responsibility to 21.
- February 2017 – The State of Connecticut introduces similar legislation.
- January 2017 – The State of New Jersey completely eliminates its cash bail system, resulting in a 20% reduction in its incarcerated population.

Goals

- To reduce TAY incarceration rates, and fully support at risk transition aged youth who come in contact with the system: As civic leaders we firmly believe it is our duty to advocate on behalf of the young people of San Francisco.
- As young people who will be paying taxes in this city for the foreseeable future, we don't want our tax money going towards servicing debt for further investments in our jail system – the system is broken and it's important that we do more than just say it.

Key Stakeholders

- Community Cosponsors: Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice, and Project WHAT!.
- Letters of Support: Larkin Street Youth Services, Coleman Advocates, and The Young Women's Freedom Center, Office of Transgender Initiatives, Human Rights Commission
- Civic Institutions: The Human Rights Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women voted unanimously to support our resolution. Our presentation with the Juvenile Probation Department Commission went well, and we are awaiting their next meeting to request an action item from them as well.

Current Status

- Met with Supervisor Fewer, and she has supported our request for a Budget and Legislative Analyst report.
- We met with their staff earlier this week, and eagerly await their report.
- We have published our first draft of our Budget and Policy Priorities, in which we will incorporate our funding requests for this budgeting cycle.
- Engaging young people and community stakeholders to create a coalition behind our movement.

Closing Remarks

- Thank you for your time, it was an honor to be able to present this to you.
- We ask that you take a vote to draft a letter of endorsement in support of this legislation.
- If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to ask.