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From: Board Of Supervisors
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 1:51 PM
To: Agenda Management Support
Subject: #10 comment_Johnston, P

From: Paul Johnston <paultijo@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2025 5:53 PM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Cc: Welcoming Network <santacruzwelcome@gmail.com>
Subject: Item 10, support for LGBTQ+ and immigration legal services

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Dear friends,

I am sorry that I will not be able to speak on this item at the meeting tomorrow. I'm sending this notes hoping to ensure that you have a chance to review my comments. By way of introduction to those whom I have not been able to meet: I am a retired public sociologist. In the past I engaged intensely with the Board during community efforts to end past-Sheriff Wowack's use of our jail to hold our neighbors for deportation; I subsequently helped your predecessors draft the language for your sanctuary policy. More recently I am active in the Santa Cruz Welcoming Network. Earlier, while serving as a consultant to Santa Clara County, I helped that county launch the first local office of immigrant affairs in the country.

Throughout these years I have consistently advocated, in many published Op Eds and other forum, for expanded county leadership in immigrant affairs. So I support and applaud your action. I'd also ask you to consider this a first step: please do not stop here. Perhaps you might consider several questions:

1. Will LGBTQ+ support services begin to include support for refugees fleeing to our community due to persecution for their gender identities?
2. Some other California counties have long provided much more funding and leadership in public planning for immigration legal services. Will our county's commitment will be similarly sustained and expanded?
3. By itself this amount of support will not have a significant impact on representation for vulnerable families given the scale of need unless it is part of a meaningful planning effort. Will your staff begin to provide public leadership to build regional capacity in this field?

4. Specifically: might the funds could be allocated through a process that includes needs assessment that leads to a planning process, including identifying additional sources of support and promotes collaborative services and fundraising similar, again, to other counties?

5. Finally: It's widely recognized that our county boundaries are artificial barriers to good planning and community services, especially for immigrant communities centered as they are in the Salinas Valley. Combined public support can help overcome barriers to collaboration, and regional planning can leverage much more significant levels of foundation support. So I can you please direct county planners to engage with their counterparts in the 4-county region that includes Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito and south Santa Clara counties to convene and steer a regional planning effort?

I'd like to note that at a January convening of immigrant-serving agencies on the central coast, Attorney General Bonta advised us that major public foundations which put millions of dollars annually into rural community development in California have approached him to ask where, given these new circumstances, they should direct "a lot of money". He said he had advised them to fund rural immigration legal services in areas like the central coast. I sincerely hope that through collaboration and public leadership YOU can leverage our county's support in a way the makes a meaningful difference in this deeply under-served region.

Thanks for your consideration.

Paul Johnston
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