

General Government

15. Approve the Proposed 2025-26 Budget for the County Executive Office, including any supplemental materials, and take related actions, as outlined in the referenced budget documents, and as recommended by the County Executive Officer

Name: Cassie Gazipura

Comment - 06/02/2025 09:15 PM: (Against)

To the Member of the Board,

As a community member, attorney, and someone who has been involved with the Justice and Gender Commission (JAG) since its inception, I urge you not to defund the leadership infrastructure that has guided this Commission from the start. JAG has become a rare example of what true community-rooted justice work can look like—built on trust, deep relationships, and a clear vision. From its beginnings as a task force formed to revive the inactive Domestic Violence Commission, JAG has grown into a highly effective body with sustained participation not only from its 16 appointed commissioners but from 25–30 members of the public at nearly every meeting. That kind of consistent engagement, especially from those with lived experience, should not be taken lightly.

JAG has gained and maintained the trust of a remarkably broad coalition—District Attorney’s Office, Public Defender’s Office, law enforcement, the courts, and community-based organizations—who continue to show up because the Commission has proven itself as a space where work gets done. It has already advanced unanimously approved policy recommendations such as the Safe Release Program and successfully advocated to reopen Blaine Street and push for the reinstatement of contact visits. These are not abstract goals—they directly impact public safety, family stability, and the dignity of incarcerated women in our county.

This work doesn’t happen by chance. It has been supported by consistent, knowledgeable stewardship and a diverse coalition that cares deeply about the lived realities of the people JAG exists to serve. The kind of trust and participation JAG has built—across systems and communities—cannot simply be handed off to internal administrative staff unfamiliar with the relationships, expertise, and sensitivity this work demands. To do so, especially without a clear transition plan, risks unraveling years of progress.

Now is not the time to divest from a commission that is not only working—but working in a way that few others are. If changes are being considered, they must be made with transparency, care, and a commitment to preserving the structure that has made JAG effective. Please invest in the leadership and community trust that make this Commission one of the most impactful in Santa Cruz County.

Sincerely,

Cassie Gazipura