

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2020

CONTACT: Laura Kohn, laura@laurakohn.org or Warsan Artan, warsan@youthwill.org

CANDIDATES AGREE WITH NEED FOR ‘OFFICE OF CHILD AND YOUTH SUCCESS’ IN THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

A Coalition of Child and Family Serving Organizations is Advocating for the new mayor and council to prioritize San Diego’s children, youth and families alongside traditional infrastructure and public safety goals

SAN DIEGO -- A coalition of over 30 child and family serving organizations has joined forces to advocate that the City of San Diego place priority on the planning and resources to make the city the best place to grow up, learn and raise children. Citing the enormous stress placed on children, youth and families by the COVID-19 crisis — which has exposed inequities and chronic struggles of families in the city — the coalition argues that the time is now to create a dedicated **Office of Child and Youth Success** to help shift the city’s focus from managing development to structurally changing the way the city supports and nurtures the next generation of community members.

According to the coalition’s [concept paper](#), the **Office of Child and Youth Success** will fill a void and unify activities, support and services that are currently either missing or disjointed throughout the city. The office will facilitate cross-departmental initiatives, community partnerships and collaborative funding proposals for state, federal and foundation grants.

Even before COVID-19, employers and economic development organizations began raising alarm bells and [producing studies](#) about the lack of child care in the city. The **Office of Child and Youth Success** will help drive changes in such areas as increased child care availability, quality, and affordability; reduced family housing insecurity; reduced child poverty; increased child and youth food security, mental health and safe physical activity; youth engagement in STEM fields; and increased youth employment; which can all help lead to increased high school graduation rates, college and post-secondary matriculation, as well as increased female labor force participation.

As part of their effort to advocate for the creation of an **Office of Child and Youth Success**, the coalition asked each of the candidates running for office in the city to respond to questions about the creation of this department. Each of the seven candidates who responded were supportive of the concept, including both of the candidates for Mayor.

“First, I think there’s a lack of the youth voice at City Hall. The City has a Youth Commission, but it’s not functional – it needs to be, and I will change that as Mayor,” mayoral candidate **Assemblymember Todd Gloria** said in his response. “Second, I think the City has not done enough to invest in city infrastructure that serves youth and their families. That’s inclusive of our sidewalks and transportation infrastructure, but also our parks and recreation facilities. We have to change that.”

While not all the respondents committed to precisely what the coalition is advocating for, they all agree the need is there.

“As Mayor, my office will include a School Engagement Coordinator who will develop partnerships between employers and schools so that, from a young age, children are aware of the opportunities available to them,” responded **City Councilmember Barbara Bry**, also running for Mayor. “I will initiate collaboration among our city, the County, and other local cities, to promote development of more childcare programs and facilities, located where they can best serve our residents’ needs, and facilitate establishing a larger network of private in-home childcare facilities.”

The office will be created with the assistance of the National League of Cities, and modeled after similar offices in Seattle, San Francisco, Baltimore and Denver.

“A lot of times we look at issues such as housing, food insecurity or unemployment as issues that impact adults and forget how these issues jeopardize the well-being of our children and youth,” said Warsan Artan, Youth Organizer for Youth Will __. “When city government starts to listen to our children, to our youth, and our families and we’ll see the quality of life improve for everyone.”

To support economic recovery from the pandemic, education, child care and youth services will need to be elevated as top priorities as a new mayor and five new city councilmembers take office. Here are responses from City Council candidates about the concept paper and the proposed creation of the **Office of Child and Youth Success** (full responses can be [found here](#)):

Joe LaCava, Candidate for City Council District 1

“I agree, our community must come together intentionally in support of children, youth, and their families if we are to have a resilient, equitable, and racially just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a bold vision that every city and county should aspire to – irrespective of economic conditions, but timely as we plan for the recovery from the pandemic.”

Will Moore, Candidate for City Council District 1

“This is an extremely tough time for San Diego’s budget. We still do not know what the long term effects of COVID will be or what kind of state and federal assistance we can expect. But the argument you have presented for the need for An Executive Office of Child and Youth Success is extremely convincing and as a council representative I will be very interested in exploring how we can make this happen.”

Toni Duran, Candidate for City Council District 3

“During this pandemic we have seen how access to education is not equitable for all. Not every family has access to a computer, other learning devices, or even internet access. The local Black Lives Matter organization put a call out for help for Black families who couldn’t afford bookbags, notebooks, pens and pencils, hand sanitizer, masks, and more. I joined community members who answered that call, but we must do better.”

Marni VonWilpert, Candidate for City Council District 5

“One of the biggest gaps I see is access to childcare for working parents. Childcare is crucial to many working parents, and the cost of childcare in San Diego is very expensive. Moreover, not every child has access to basic technology, such as computers and the internet – which makes educational gaps in this era of distance learning even wider. San Diego youth also need good workforce development programs, especially as we have many Transitional Age Youth who are graduating from high school or college in the midst of an economic recession due to the pandemic. Finally, no child or youth in San Diego should face discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, sex, gender, gender identity, religion, or LGBTQ+ status.”

Raul Campillo, Candidate for City Council District 7

“If this were in place right now, we would see a coordinated effort to assist parents struggling to care and provide opportunities to their children during COVID. As a former teacher, I also know that the expanded opportunities for true accessibility to learning, physical, and social activities promotes the well-being of children and families. So, to that end, I would make sure that the Office of Child and Youth Success would be listed in my budget priorities memorandum for the upcoming budget cycle, arguing that the \$350,000 initial investment is exactly that—an investment—which will provide excellent value.”

Sean Elo, Candidate for City Council District 9

“I fully support the creation of this office and would prioritize its funding in my budget priority memo and continuously advocate for its inclusion throughout the process.”

“Because there is no plan, the services offered are insufficient and disjointed. For example, quality affordable childcare and preschool are inaccessible to many San Diegans. Additionally, there is a lack of afterschool programs for low and middle income families and an additional barrier to participation in the programs that do exist as a result of lack of transportation. For transitional aged youth, the City fails to provide the relatively inexpensive and incredibly fruitful assistance needed for those from lower income families to participate in critical career programs.”

The coalition advocating for the **Office of Child and Youth Success** includes:

Altus Schools, A Reason To Survive (ARTS), American Academy of Pediatrics, CA Chapter 3, ArtReach, Bayside Community Center, BOOST Collaborative, The Chicano Federation, Casa Familiar, Child Development Associates, City Heights CDC, Clare Rose Foundation, The David's Harp Foundation, Educational Enrichment Systems, Inc., Game Face Video, SD Home Start, Inc., Kid Ventures, LISC San Diego, MAAC Project, Mid-City CAN, Outdoor Outreach, Parent Institute for Quality Education, Parent Voices, San Diego Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA), Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest ,RISE Research & Evaluation, San Diego 350, San Diego Creative Youth Development Network, San Diego 360, San Diego for Every Child, SAY San Diego, TOOTRiS, Child Care On-Demand, Words Alive, YMCA of San Diego County, and County Youth Will ___.

###