



## Contra Costa Budget Justice Coalition

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May 3, 2019

Supervisor John Gioia, District I and Board Chair  
Supervisor Candace Anderson, District II  
Supervisor Diane Burgis, District III  
Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, District IV  
Supervisor Federal Glover, District V

Dear Supervisors:

On behalf of the members of the Contra Costa Budget Justice Coalition, this letter provides additional context and follow-up requests from the Coalition's comments at the April 16<sup>th</sup> Board budget hearing. We would appreciate your feedback on these points at the Board budget hearing on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

Points for your consideration include:

1. **January Annual Board Retreat.** While we understand that the Board is in regular communication with the County Administrator and (to a lesser extent) with Department Directors about a variety of budget issues, we would like to request a **formal analysis and public presentation of community needs** in addition to the macro-economic overview and county budget preview. The purpose of such a presentation will be to provide the Board with a more robust context for overseeing the development and approval of the budget, and to provide the community with a full snapshot of the relevant issues that should be considered in setting budget priorities and guiding the budgeting process.
  - **Request:** Direct Department directors to identify, analyze and present service gaps and unmet needs that exist under current funding levels, and the impacts these gaps have on residents most in need. While the overall economic picture might be rosy for some, there are still many in Contra Costa who are struggling to make ends meet or living below the poverty line. The attached "Snapshot of Poverty: Contra Costa County" report by United Way Bay Area presents data on income and social welfare measures relevant to setting budget priorities.
2. **County staffing:** We recently gained deeper insight into one of the challenges the County faces in filling allocated and existing staff positions, which is a chronic delay in the hiring process and related HR functions. Numerous county staff members have relayed that it can take up to six months from the time someone is made an offer until their start date (and sometimes even longer). A two- to four-month delay appears to be common. Obviously, very few people can wait that long to start a job after an offer is made, with the result that candidates often accept jobs in other organizations instead, which then necessitates re-opening the hiring process. This situation is clearly untenable.

We do not know the causes for these delay. Nor do we know whether or how much the Board understands the causes and impacts of these delays, nor what action the Board and County Administrator are taking to address the issue. We believe this is **an urgent problem requiring leadership and pro-active remediation**. These delays clearly adversely impact County departments' ability to provide timely and effective services to some of the most vulnerable residents in our County. Of particular concern is the continuing delay in adding sufficient CalFresh staff to handle the upcoming influx of new clients due to the pending SSI expansion.

- **Request:** Direct the County Administrator to report back on the causes of these hiring delays, actions being taken, and proposed additional solutions to address these ongoing, unacceptably long delays in hiring County staff.

3. **County financial reserves:** Our understanding is that there is approximately \$100 million in unassigned reserve funds over and above the county's required 10% reserve level. Of this amount, \$30 million is allocated to the new Administration and Emergency Services facilities, leaving \$70 million in excess reserves. We were informed that some of these funds will assist with managing cash flow, and that some funds may be allocated to fund health services for justice system detainees. It seems extremely unlikely that \$70 million is required for these two tasks, and we assume the remainder is being held in reserve due to an abundance of caution. While we understand the need to manage financial risk, we also want to emphasize that **the definition of risk is not solely financial**. The opportunity costs of holding funds in reserve due to an exclusive concern about fiscal risk, during a time when community members are going without needed shelter, food and other safety net services, should be explicitly explained in the budget analysis and presentation.
4. **CalFresh staffing:** At the April budget hearing, Supervisor Mitchoff requested that the Employment and Human Services director provide a progress report on hiring additional workers for the CalFresh program to ensure they can meet the expected increase in demand in light of SSI recipients becoming eligible for CalFresh starting June 1, 2019. Coalition members share her strong interest in receiving this information and monitoring subsequent progress.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective and requests. We look forward to ongoing dialogue about these issues in light of our shared interest in helping all County residents to be economically more secure.

Sincerely,

Mariana Moore and Dan Geiger

On behalf of the Contra Costa Budget Justice Coalition

Organizational Members

AFSCME Local 2700

Asian Pacific Environmental Network

Choice in Aging

Community Clinic Consortium

Contra Costa Labor Council

Contra Costa Office of Education

East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy

Ensuring Opportunity

First 5 Contra Costa/Family Economic Security

Partnership (FESP)

Greater Richmond Interfaith Program

Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano

Human Services Alliance of Contra Costa

IFPTE Local 21

League of Women Voters Diablo Valley

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Meals on Wheels Senior Outreach

Multi-Faith Action Coalition

Planned Parenthood of Northern California

Racial Justice Coalition

Richmond Community Foundation

Rubicon Programs

Safe Return

SEIU Local 1021

*And many residents of Contra Costa*