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Katherine Douglas *Public Comment, Health and Human Services*

From: Emily Lorenzana <emilylo@futureleadersnow.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 1:29 PM
To: sbcob
Cc: Irma Torres
Subject: Behavioral Wellness Budget - Public Comment

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Good afternoon, Chair and Supervisors,
My name is Emily Lorenzana, and I am the Community Organizer with Future Leaders of America. I'm here today in support of the Behavioral Wellness budget. Behavioral Wellness plays a critical role in our community by funding a full continuum of care, from prevention and early intervention to treatment and crisis response. These services are essential, especially for the communities we serve. Through this investment, FLA is able to provide prevention programming that reaches young people before they enter crisis. We work directly with youth to build leadership, increase awareness around substance use, and support healthy decision-making. I have witnessed firsthand how it can affect our community if youth are without access to prevention, education, and early intervention. Many of my peers including myself and the youth we work with, know someone who has overdosed, died, or been impacted by drugs/alcohol/etc, because they did not have access to these important resources that are desperately needed to support the future leaders of our community. The youth from Santa Barbara deserve to be a priority. As someone from this community, I know how important it is that youth have access to these opportunities. These funds don't just support FLA, they sustain a broader network of community-based organizations that are trusted in their communities and provide culturally responsive services that the government alone cannot deliver. At a time when difficult budget decisions are being made, I urge you to protect and sustain funding for prevention programs. Consistent investment ensures that we can continue reaching youth early and making a lasting impact. Thank you for your time and your commitment to our community.

Best,



Emily Lorenzana (she/her/ella)
Santa Barbara Community Organizer
Future Leaders of America
P: (805) 642-6208
A: 1219 State Street Santa Barbara, CA 93101
W: FutureLeadersNow.org E: emilylo@futureleadersnow.org

Katherine Douglas

From: Irma Torres <irma@futureleadersnow.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 4:21 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Behavioral Wellness Budget Public Comment

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Good morning Board of Supervisors,

My name is Irma, and I am a Health Equity & Organizing Manager with Future Leaders of America here in Santa Barbara.

I want to begin by acknowledging, in my personal capacity, Behavioral Wellness for their continued investment in prevention and early intervention. I also recognize the important role that law enforcement plays in maintaining safety in our communities. This is not about taking away from one system, but about ensuring we are also strengthening another as a community.

We also know that other counties and cities across California are making similar investments, directing cannabis tax revenue toward youth services, prevention, and community-based programs. These approaches reflect a broader understanding that prevention and early investment lead to stronger long-term outcomes.

One example of this work locally is our Cannabis Youth Champions program. Youth are trained to lead peer-to-peer prevention efforts focused on substance use education and awareness. Each cohort reaches over 100 of their peers directly through school-based presentations and workshops, providing accurate information and creating space for honest conversations around decision-making and health.

Champions also expand their impact through community outreach and prevention campaigns, reaching hundreds of youth and community members. This work reinforces prevention messaging and helps shift norms through trusted, youth-led engagement.

Through my work with FLA, I support youth leadership and prevention programming focused on substance use awareness/prevention, mental health, and healthy decision-making, and I've seen firsthand how critical it is to have resources in place.

Our youth are not only participants they are educators, advocates, and leaders in their own communities. They collaborate with schools, peers, and community partners to deliver presentations, lead discussions, and create spaces where other young people feel safe asking questions and accessing support. This is the next generation of leaders in Santa Barbara County.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration, and for your continued collaboration with community partners to support the health and safety of our communities and youth.

In good health,

Irma



Irma Torres, (she/her/ella)

Health Equity & Organizing Manager

Future Leaders of America

P: (805) 642-6208

A: PO Box 396, Santa Maria, CA 93456

W: FutureLeadersNow.org E: irma@futureleadersnow.org