

OAKLAND
PROGRESSIVE
ALLIANCE



To: Members of the Oakland City Council

From: The Oakland Progressive Alliance, Oakland Tenants Union and Homeless Advocacy Working Group

Date: May 27, 2022

Re: Adjustments to the Mid-cycle Budget

We, the Oakland Progressive Alliance, a coalition of 12 progressive community, labor and policy advocacy organizations, in collaboration with the Oakland Tenants Union, support several critical adjustments to the mid-cycle budget. These recommended adjustments are the result of community organizing led by Community Ready Corps, Parent Voices Oakland, and the Anti Police-Terror Project, one part of a larger campaign to advance a **Black Solidarity Agenda** – a natural outgrowth of work done to envision Oakland’s Black New Deal. It also advances work that flowed from the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force, a process that APTP led from beginning to end. We are calling on the City Council and Administration to stand with us in prioritizing:

- *Housing as a human right to A) Increase funding to the Preservation Affordability Fund and fund “transitional age” youth housing B) Address homelessness and C) Increase funding for eviction defense and legal protections for renters and long-term residents*
- *Reinvest in our public services serving Black & Brown communities in the Flatlands including ongoing funding and support for the Head Start and Summer Food Programs*
- *Reinvest in alternatives to public safety by maintaining and expanding MACRO*

- *Reinvest in arts and culture*
- *Protect front line workers by **enforcing worker protections through the Department of Workplace and Employment Standards and supporting a fair contract for city employees***

We are also calling on the City Council to support language justice and inclusion of Oakland's diverse communities by making sure translation is available for all city council, commissions, and committee meetings.

The following is a summary of the budget items and policy directives that are necessary to continue addressing the myriad inequities that impact Black Oaklanders:

1. Reinvesting in Housing as a Human Right by prioritizing:

a. Tenant and housing protections by increasing funding for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program Up to \$1 million

Oakland's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) provides Oaklanders in imminent danger of losing their housing with potential access to emergency funding. This program has been absolutely critical during the COVID-19 pandemic and remains critical now as there are countless Black families throughout Oakland that are currently facing eviction. Oakland needs its city council to commit to a longstanding emergency rental assistance program that will keep Oakland's most vulnerable renters in their homes.

b. Extending the Eviction Defense Program to stand with tenants impacted by the ongoing pandemic

Not only is emergency funding necessary, but Black Oaklanders also need access to eviction defense. Predatory landlords continue to take advantage of vulnerable renters by threatening/pursuing evictions on questionable legal grounds. Unless tenants are informed of their rights and can be supported in their defense of those rights, these landlords will continue to push Black Oaklanders out of their homes without consequence.

c. Reinvesting in Transitional Age Youth Housing

The Oakland Progressive Alliance is in solidarity with the youth who demand that their city council provide increased resources and services for unhoused transitional age youth in Oakland. While there are an outsized number of unhoused transitional age youth in the city, there are very few services that target that demographic, especially for those youth who do not fit the criteria often attached to those resources. The City of Oakland has before it a prime opportunity to invest in its TAYHUB - a career technical education center being developed at 1025 Second Avenue in Oakland. It is important that Oakland embrace the hub into its ecosystem of support for transitional age youth in Oakland – they can do so by investing

resources to ensure that the hub is well positioned to engage with the many potentially supportive structures (Laney, Dewey, La Escuelita Education Center) in its immediate vicinity.

d. Supporting Oakland's unhoused communities

The Oakland Progressive Alliance strongly supports investment to restore human rights by improving health and safety conditions at encampments. We support the recommendations advanced to council by the Homeless Advocacy Working Group (HAWG).

e. Continuing to fund the Preservation Affordability Fund

We must set aside resources for programs like the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase to support home ownership for working families.

2. Reinvesting in Public Services that serve Black families and communities of color

a. Preserve and Expand Head Start

While emergency funding to save Head Start in Oakland was secured in late 2021, the program still needs a complete reinvestment from the City of Oakland and its administration if the program is to survive. With millions of dollars of Measure AA funds at the discretion of the administration, city council must send a strong signal regarding its support for Head Start as a robust Oakland-run program that will not only exist here but will thrive.

b. Supporting the Summer Foods Program

Oakland's Summer Foods Service Program needs desperately to be revitalized so Black youth across the city have access to healthy food options at accessible sites.

3. Reinvesting and expanding community safety programs

a. Maintain & Expand the MACRO program

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Anti Police-Terror Project, the Oakland Progressive Alliance, the Defund the Police Coalition, and many other supporting organizations, MACRO finally launched in April of 2022. To be successful, the MACRO program must receive continued investment from the City of Oakland. The city council needs a concrete expansion plan for MACRO and must commit to availing itself of every opportunity to increase the size and scope of the program.

b. Support transparency and accountable spending at the Oakland Police Department

We are calling on the Council to follow through with the Directive passed during the 2022-23 Budget Cycle to carry out an audit of the Oakland Police Department to confront overspending

and excessive overtime. To free up tens of millions of dollars for use to advance the Black Solidarity Agenda, Oakland's City Council must end OPD's reign of rampant and unchecked spending. While Oakland's housing crisis increases and families struggle to stay safe, OPD continues to maximize their total compensation packages by any means available to them under their incredibly generous bargaining agreement. We are calling on the City Council to support transparency and redirecting OPDs overspending toward reinvesting in public services and alternatives to public safety.

4. Reinvesting in Black Arts and Culture

We are calling on the Council to continue to advance the investments that were made last summer to increase much needed funding for Black artists and Black arts initiatives in the City of Oakland. The restoration of funding for arts programs in Oakland has only just begun in earnest, and we depend on the council to ensure that Black arts initiatives in Oakland that have been budgeted are carried out by the administration.

5. Reinvesting in Frontline & Essential Workers

a. Fund and Staff the Department of Workplace and Employment Standards

We call on the City to complete the hiring process for the DWES Directors with significant input from community and worker rights organizations, to maintain the full amount budgeted for DWES in 2023 and to fill all the vacant positions in the Department.

b. Fair Contract for City Workers

We call on the city administration to negotiate and for the Council to support a fair contract that invests in the front line and essential city workers who help keep our city running.

Finally, we cannot have an open and transparent budget process without language and community access to meetings. We're calling on the council to set aside \$1 million for dedicated (pilot) language access program that would 1) ensure that there is dedicated interpretation at city council meetings for residents that engage in public comment 2) dedicated interpretation of city council meetings and committee meetings 3) on call interpreters/interpretation for additional non prevailing languages and 4) translated materials for city council agendas and relevant public documents.

Thank you for your time and attention to our interests. We look forward to continuing this important dialogue with you over the coming weeks.

On behalf of the Oakland Progressive Alliance, the Oakland Tenants Union, and the Homeless Advocacy Working Group,

Clarissa Douthard, Executive Director
Parent Voices Oakland
Co-Chair, Oakland Progressive Alliance

Yeon Park, Vice President, East Bay
SEIU Local 1021
Co-Chair, Oakland Progressive Alliance

James Vann, Co-Founder
Oakland Tenants Union
Advisory - HAWG