

County of Santa Clara  
Board of Supervisors  
Supervisorial District Three  
Supervisor Dave Cortese



---

98065

**DATE:** August 13, 2019  
**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Dave Cortese, Supervisor  
**SUBJECT:** Foster Care Pilot Program

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Approve referral to County Counsel and Administration to return to the Board, through the Children Seniors and Families Committee, with options for implementing a basic income pilot program under which young people transitioning out of the foster care system would receive unconditional cash payments. (Cortese)

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

I am proposing a pilot program to test the impact of regular, unconditional cash grants to foster youth ages 18-21 in the County. Over the last decade, a growing body of evidence supports the idea that unconditional cash payments provided to people experiencing economic hardship or uncertainty is a potentially transformative intervention. Studies have show that such payments can reduce poverty and increase wellbeing, positive health outcomes, and educational attainment. A few local governments in the United States have initiated pilot programs providing a basic income to residents, including the City of Stockton, which is in the middle of a pilot program under which 130 city residents are receiving an unconditional payment of \$500 per month for 18 months.

The County is well situated to create and evaluate an innovative pilot program to test the effectiveness of a basic income in improving the lives of some of the neediest members of our community. Youth transitioning out of the foster care system are a group of residents who are particularly in need of and deserve robust support. Creating a pilot program to provide a basic income to these youth will allow the County to better support their transition out of our foster care system and to help them find a stable path to success, wellbeing, and independence.

To minimize the fiscal impact of such a pilot to the County and maximize the resources available to support this initiative, partnerships with philanthropic organizations should be

explored. Many philanthropic organizations have expressed interest in supporting basic income pilot initiatives and funding evaluations of such programs. Further, such a program should be designed to maximally leverage and integrate existing funding streams available to support the needs of youth transitioning out of the foster care system, most notably from the state.

The report from County Counsel and Administration should address (1) the number of young people who could be included in such a program, (2) the size of payment needed to cover participants' basic needs and recommendations regarding the overall budget for the pilot, (3) how such a program would be aligned with and augment other support and services available to these young people, and (4) how such a program could best be evaluated.