

Ending Poverty in California Report—Recommendations

The 2022 Report Ending Poverty in California: A Blueprint for a Just and Inclusive Society (available [here](#)) contains five categories of recommendations to overhaul the institutions that contribute to poverty: “predistributional” reforms targeting the economic and other upstream institutions that generate inequities, and “redistributional” reforms that focus on the public systems designed to redress poverty. Within each category, in turn, there are several sub-categories of specific recommendations and actions. These recommendations and prescribed actions are listed in [blue](#) in this document. Below each recommendation are listed specific San Mateo County programs and actions undertaken during the most recent two fiscal years (FY 2021-23) as well as general programs and policies that implement or address (at least in part) each recommendation.

In summary, with respect to the redistributional recommended reforms, the County has implemented a wide range of programs and actions that address or implement support for overlooked populations and reduction of transaction/application costs. One of the key innovations for redistributional programs recommended by the report is guaranteed income programs, an area where the County could explore impactful new initiatives targeted to specific populations at the local level. Many other of the recommended changes to the redistributional system would require state or federal legislative and regulatory changes.

With respect to predistributional institution reform, the County has undertaken significant investments in furtherance of many of the recommendations regarding housing development, childcare and early education, and support for small business ownership. Many of the report’s recommendations regarding the empowerment/protection of workers and reform of the criminal justice system would require changes to state and federal law.

I. Redistributional System

Safety Net Recommendations

1. Support overlooked Populations

- Support undocumented and mixed-status households: Include undocumented and mixed-status households in safety net programs by reforming eligibility rules or providing parallel state-funded programs
 - Removal defense legal services to immigrants (\$2.2M Measure K FY 2021-23): support for legal representation for residents facing removal proceedings as well as affirmative outreach and workshops to immigrants on their rights, benefits, and path to citizenship
 - COVID-19 Immigrant Relief Fund (\$3M Measure K): C-19 financial assistance (\$1K one-time grant) for residents ineligible for federal financial assistance programs
 - Medi-Cal expansions extending health coverage regardless of documentation status
 - Local health coverage program (sec. 17000) ACE that currently covers 22,500 for those with incomes under FPL 200% with no asset limit. §

- Support households without workers: Include households without any workers or with only part-time workers in safety net programs by reforming eligibility rules or providing parallel state-funded programs
 - [governed by state/federal laws and rules]
- Support adults not living with children: Increase safety net supports for adults not living with children
 - [governed by state/federal laws and rules]
- Provide guaranteed income: Supplement existing safety net supports with guaranteed income to close gaps and ensure a minimum income floor
 - Unincorporated Area C-19 Financial Assistance (\$1.5M ARPA): \$500 assistance payments to households impacted by C-19 at < 60% AMI
 - Immigrant Families Recovery Program (\$3.1M Children’s Health Initiative Trust Fund): Guaranteed income of \$400/ month for 12-24 months for 500 families excluded from federal child tax credit
 - Proposed Pilot GI program for former foster youth (\$730K Measure K + \$1.1M other sources): \$1,000 monthly assistance for transitional age foster youth

2. Reduce Transaction Costs

- Eliminate dignity-stripping and time-consuming barriers to support: Soften the destructive effects of federal “make work” program requirements
 - SMC offers phone interview options for CalWORKs, CalFresh, General Assistance and CAPI programs. Telephonic signature option is also available for all programs. Clients have the option to request an in-person office interview for all aid programs
- Enhanced coordination: Coordinate requirements, referrals, and caseworker training across safety net programs
 - All SMC Regional Office Benefits Analysts are trained on Medi-Cal, CalFresh CalWORKs, and General Assistance programs and can evaluate eligibility for any of the programs offered during the interview.
 - Whole Person Care (\$4M Measure K): Pilot to provide coordinated delivery of medical, behavioral health, housing, and social services to high-risk and vulnerable populations
- Data integration and automation: Implement data integration and alignment and data sharing across safety net programs ... thus making it possible to automate application and recertification (e.g., prefill forms, automate income documentation and benefits calculation, trigger automatic applications for individuals who are likely to be eligible)
 - California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) – The new CalSAWS system integrates all 58 California counties into one public assistance system, allowing for the reduction of barriers in enrollment and increased automation of administrative processes. SMC will “go live” in the new system on July 3, 2023
- Unified delivery system: Deliver benefits through a single integrated system
 - [See CalSAWS notes above]

- Remove financial barriers: Remove financial barriers to accessing support by reducing costs of internet access and by providing free assistance for tax preparation and ITIN application
 - Many of Core Services Agencies provide free tax preparation assistance
 - North Fair Oaks Economic Advancement Center (Renaissance) will provide ITIN application support
 - Expanded Public WiFi (\$3.5M ARPA): This funding provides for the operation and maintenance of County Wi-Fi locations and other strategies to connect residents to quality, affordable internet access.

3. Ensure Universal Workplace Benefits

- Upgrade paid family leave program: Improve state paid family leave by increasing the wage replacement rate for low-wage employees, increasing weeks of job protection and leave, and bolstering the program’s finances
 - [governed by state/federal laws and rules]
- Portable benefits: Improve portable health insurance benefits with expanded eligibility and enhanced public subsidies (via enhancements to Medi-Cal and Covered California). Improve portable retirement benefits with expanded eligibility and public subsidies (building on CalSavers)
 - [governed by state/federal laws and rules]

II. *Predistributive System*

Reducing the Wealth Gap Recommendations

1. Reduce the Wealth Gap at Birth

- Baby bonds: Provide baby bonds to children in families with low incomes (without restrictive limitations on uses)

2. Expand Opportunities to Build Wealth

- Increase opportunities for homeownership: Expand programs providing homebuyers with loans and down payment assistance, expand self-help housing plans, and expand shared equity programs. Change zoning in ways that open new opportunities to build wealth among people of color.
 - HEART First Time Home Buyer Program (seed funding provided by Measure K): Housing Endowment and Regional Trust Non-Profit offering down-payment assistance loans
 - Below Market Rate program provides homeownership opportunities for low income residents
 - In response to new State laws related to permitting and zoning reform and housing production, P&B staff are undertaking review of applicability and identifying regulations, policies, and procedures that may need to be updated

- Increase opportunities for entrepreneurship and small business ownership: Provide seed grants, loans, and technical assistance for low-income small business owners and microentrepreneurs
 - SSF Economic Advancement Center (\$200k ARPA+\$2M from SSF+\$1.7M other sources): Funding assistance to SSF for development of a pilot economic advancement center serving north county residents
 - Coastside and North Fair Oaks Opportunity Centers (\$5M ARPA): Funds for the development and operation for two years of Economic Advancement Centers in Half Moon Bay (\$2.5M) and North Fair Oaks (\$2.5M) to assist local households and small businesses on the Coastside and South County, respectively, that were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Choose Local San Mateo (\$300k ARPA): Incentive program for residents to shop at local businesses including restaurants
 - SMC Strong Small Business Assistance Program (\$2M ARPA): Grants to help small businesses that had not received any other pandemic assistance in the past 12 months
 - North Fair Oaks Small Business Grant Programs (\$1.2M ARPA): Grants to eligible small businesses located in unincorporated North Fair Oaks impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Micro Food Business Grant Program (\$500k ARPA): Grants of \$2,500 (for cottage food operators), \$5,000 (for caterers, food trucks, and food carts) or \$10,000 (for commissaries or incubator kitchens) each to qualifying businesses to offset losses in revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Microenterprise Home Kitchen Ordinance (\$235K ARPA): Provides \$2,500 grants to each newly permitted microenterprise home kitchens operators (MEHKO) in San Mateo County
 - Certification Support for Women-owned and Minority-owned Businesses (\$200K ARPA): Funds a program that helps women-owned businesses and minority-owned businesses impacted by the pandemic become certified under federal and state rules

3. Eliminate Disincentives and Barriers to Building Wealth

- Eliminate safety net asset tests: Eliminate all asset tests in safety net programs
 - [governed by state/federal laws and rules]
- Regulate predatory financial services: Strengthen and enforce consumer protection laws for “fringe” financial services and tax preparation
 - Elder Dependent Adult Protection Team (EDAPT) (\$1,475,758 Measure K and others): Aging and Adult Services Adult Protective Services initiative in partnership with the District Attorney’s Office to provide education to prevent and support and respond to exploitation of elderly and dependent adult’s property and financial assets.
- Provide a public bank option: Establish a public banking option via the proposed CalAccount and/or the proposed U.S. Postal Service bank. Provide free tax preparation (see Safety Net proposals).
 - Many of Core Services Agencies provide free tax preparation assistance
 - [legal authority for County to create a bank requires further legal analysis]

- End state interception of debt: End the state diversion of low-income tax credits to cover debts (and interest charges) and the use of such diversions to cover government costs
 - [governed by state/federal laws and rules]

Employment Recommendations

1. Eliminate Labor-Supply Barriers

- Address child-care bottleneck: Increase access to and quality of childcare by increasing state subsidies and reforming financing, expanding and upgrading child-care facilities, investing in child-care training, improving the child-care data infrastructure, coordinating across programs and systems, raising child-care worker pay and improving working conditions, and empowering child-care workers
 - Build Up Family Child Care Infant & Toddler Expansion Grant Program (\$870k ARPA): support for the Build Up Collaborative to expand an existing grant program to offer an additional 87 family daycare providers each with a \$10K grant
 - Childcare Grant Program (\$4.1M ARPA): Grants to San Mateo County Childcare Centers and Family Childcare Homes that have been directly and adversely impacted by COVID-19 public health emergency
 - ECE/Childcare Career Navigator (\$200K Measure K): Establish a new ECE Career Pathways Coordinator position at the San Mateo County Office of Education to be piloted over two years; Provide wrap-around supports for people entering and seeking to advance in ECE careers; Recruit individuals to enter ECE workforce Support individuals to remain in ECE workforce and advance in their careers (Leveraged funding F5, SVCF, SMCOE)
 - Childcare Facilities Ordinance (June 2021): streamlines permitting requirements for childcare centers through ministerial approval process
 - Build Up: BOS capacity building funding (\$500K) to support Build up strategic plan implementation goals and strategies supporting cities, county, business, faith-based organization, districts and providers to grow, sustain and maintain supply & demand for facilities (Center-based, Family Child Care Business). Operations leveraged by F5 (\$300K)
- Upgrade paid family leave: Improve the state’s paid family leave program by increasing the wage replacement rate for low-wage employees, increasing the number of weeks of job protection and leave, and bolstering the program’s finances (see Safety Net section)
 - [governed by state/federal laws and rules]
- Increase unemployment benefits for low-wage workers: Increase the wage-replacement rate for low-wage workers by raising the taxable wage base and linking it to the maximum wages that are insured.
 - Minimum Wage Ordinance (adopted by BOS Nov/Dec 2022): Ordinance that requires businesses operating in unincorporated areas to pay a minimum wage of \$16.50 per hour, starting on April 1, 2023 (California state minimum is \$15.50 per hour)

2. Enhance Education and Training

- Increase access to high-quality early childhood education: Expand the supply of high-quality education by increasing state subsidies, expanding facilities, and improving child-care worker pay and working conditions. Improve educational quality by investing in child-care training and infrastructure.
 - Big Lift (\$8.1M Measure K annually): Supports quality pre-school and K-2 summer learning opportunities to improve third grade reading proficiency.
 - Summer Enrichment Grant Program (\$6.3M ARPA): Provides summer enrichment programs with grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$260,000 to expand access for socio-economic disadvantaged (SED) students, students with special needs, and students who are English Language Learners
 - 2022-23 Out-of-School-Care Grant Program (\$2.5M ARPA): Aimed to increase the availability of before and after school and school vacation programs for socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) students in the County
 - Early Childhood Quality & Inclusion Project (\$1.06M F5 local and \$1.4M F5CA): Supports formal quality improvement frameworks (including a Quality Improvement System) in early learning environments, and provide the services required to help providers and programs improve their quality as measured by these frameworks. Such services may include coaching/consultation, facility enhancements; early learning provider training; and technical assistance; apprenticeship supports
- Expand sectoral training programs: Increase the number of openings in sectoral (vocational) training programs
 - Whole Person Workforce Development Pilot (\$400k ARPA): Partnership with Nova Works to provide assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers (e.g. job training, subsidized employment, employment supports or incentives)
- Expand subsidized employment programs: Expand support for subsidized employment and trial enhanced forms of subsidized employment that reach out to new subpopulations and that train for jobs with prospects for rapid career advancement
 - Supported Training Employment Program (\$850k Measure K): Pilot program sponsoring financial support for on-the-job training in order to secure long-term employment.
 - VRS programs for homeless, disabled, recently incarcerated
 - EMS Corps program (\$37k Net County Cost): Aimed at diversifying EMT workforce through paid 5-month training cohort
- Experiment with new approaches: Pilot new tax credits that subsidize training (as well as employment) and new models of real-time data-driven casework advising and mentoring
 - SMCCD Promise Scholars Program (\$2M Measure K): Two-years of funding for books and tuition for 500 local college students

3. Empower Workers

- Advocate for labor law reform: Advocate for reform to federal labor laws that suppress the capacity of workers to organize and bargain collectively
- Sectoral bargaining: Develop and pilot improved forms of sectoral bargaining
- Stakeholder models: Develop and pilot stakeholder models of corporate governance

4. Protect Workers

- Upgrade enforcement: Fund enforcement agencies and support “co-enforcement” partnerships with unions and other worker organizations
- Improved regulation: Expand protections for domestic workers and independent contractors

Housing Recommendations

1. Expand Affordable Housing Supply

- Commit to robust supply-side interventions: Ensure a rapid and substantial increase in the supply of affordable housing through streamlining, reforming zoning and incentivizing development, enforcing affordable housing targets, and increasing direct funding to develop, preserve, and rehabilitate affordable housing
 - Affordable Housing Fund (\$73M Measure K): Current amounts allocated to AHF
 - United Hope Builders Grant (\$1M Measure K): Grant funding to support the construction a modular housing manufacturing plant in East Palo Alto
 - Half Moon Bay Affordable Housing Development (\$1.5M ARPA): Farmworker housing project in Half Moon Bay
 - Affordable Housing Initiative (\$1.6M Measure K): Funding for P&B to implement key policy changes designed to increase the amount of affordable housing available
 - Home For All (\$990k Measure K): Initiative to establish a climate in San Mateo County where a diversity of housing is produced and preserved so that San Mateo County is a culturally, generationally, and economically diverse community with housing for all
 - Housing Innovation Fund (\$422k Measure K): Funding for innovative projects that address equity in housing
 - 2nd Unit Amnesty Program (\$527k Measure K): Funding for P&B services to administer 2nd unit permit amnesty program to address critical health and safety issues in non-permitted ADUs and prevent displacement
 - Inclusionary Housing Ordinance incentivizes production of affordable units in exchange for increase in allowable density
 - North Fair Oaks Rezoning and General Plan Amendment project (ongoing FY 2022-23): facilitates increased housing production in CMU and NMU zoning districts around Middlefield and El Camino
 - Farm Labor Housing (\$2M Measure K): Funding to facilitate construction of farm labor housing
 - As part of 2023-2031 Housing Element preparation, P&B produced available sites inventory to identify locations for new housing to meet County’s Regional Housing

Needs Assessment unit requirements, through infill development, development on vacant parcels, rezoning, and ADU production

2. Protect Housing-Insecure Households

- Assist those at risk: Protect struggling renters by providing rental subsidies and emergency rental assistance, bolstering tenant legal protections in just cause, rent cap, unlawful detainer, and owner move-in laws, and increasing legal aid for tenants (including guaranteeing a right to counsel for low-income tenants facing eviction)
 - Emergency Rent, Utilities and Transportation Assistance (\$2M ARPA): ARPA funding to provide relief to low-income county residents
 - Navigation Center (\$57M ARPA and Homekey): Will provide 240 safe, temporary living units and intensive on-site support services to individuals and couples experiencing homelessness
 - El Camino House (formerly Stone Villa Inn) (\$16M ARPA and Homekey): Will provide 43 non-congregate shelter units (rooms) to adults (individuals and couples) experiencing homelessness
 - Casa Esperanza (formerly Comfort Inn) (\$19.5M ARPA and Homekey): Has 51 non-congregate shelter units (rooms) for adults (individuals and couples) experiencing homelessness or households earning at or below 31% AMI
 - Pacifica Safe Parking Permit (\$400k ARPA): Program assists vehicularly housed individuals at risk of homelessness who have been negatively impacted by the pandemic
 - Eviction Counseling/Legal Aid (\$2M ARPA): Provide up to \$2,000,000 in eviction counseling and legal services to assist low-income tenants
 - DOH Local Housing Subsidy Program (\$4M Measure K): Provides up to 100 locally funded housing vouchers
 - Affordable Housing Expertise for Small/Mid-Sized Cities (\$125k ARPA): Start-up costs of a shared housing consultants program to provide small and mid-sized cities in the County with affordable housing development expertise that would assist residents impacted by the pandemic
 - Working Together to End Homelessness Innovation Grant (\$2.4M ARPA): Support the piloting of bold and innovative approaches to assist the 1,092 unsheltered residents of San Mateo County
 - Housing Retention (\$2.5M Measure K): Measure K funding program to ensure housing retention for individuals at risk of losing housing
 - Center on Homelessness Housing Assistance (\$5M Measure K): Center on Homelessness funding for housing assistance needs
 - CORE Agency Emergency Housing Assistance (\$944k Measure K): Funds for emergency housing assistance through CORE
 - HIP Shared Housing (\$355k Measure K): Program supporting shared housing situations to increase affordability
 - Augmented Housing Inspection Program (\$800k Measure K): Funding for enhanced routine inspections of apartment complexes to ensure adequate living standards

- Provide swift assistance to those who are homeless: Ensure homelessness is brief, rare, and non-recurring by supporting robust local services that provide immediate permanent housing, supportive housing, dedicated vouchers and affordable units, shallow rent subsidies, and housing subsidy pools
 - Rapid Rehousing and Housing Locator Services (\$3.9M Measure K)
 - Coordinated Entry System: Comprehensive assessment of individuals prioritizes them based on need and acuity and coordinates service provision across Core Agencies
 - Homeless Outreach Teams (\$457k Measure K): Funding for on-the-ground outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness in order to connect them with resources.
 - EPA Homeless Shelter Operations (\$607k Measure K): Funding for operations of EPA homeless shelter (WeHope)
 - Bridge Funding for SSF Safe Harbor Shelter (\$189k Measure K)
 - Peninsula Family Service: Therapeutic Child Development Centers (\$480k): Supported by F5SMC at two LifeMoves family shelters in SMC. These TCDCs provide mental health support, occupational therapy, and case management services for families with infants, toddlers and preschoolers living in the LifeMoves Shelters. Parents are able to participate in job training and look for work and housing while their young children are in a safe and therapeutic environment

Justice System Recommendations

1. Decriminalize “Quality of Life” Offenses

- End the criminalization of poverty and homelessness: Eliminate or rewrite laws that have the effect of criminalizing poverty and homelessness. Deprioritize enforcement of “quality of life” crimes.
 - Probation supports diversion programs for “nuisance” offenses (e.g., through Specialty Courts such as Drug Court)
 - Creation of Mobile Probation services to assist individuals, particularly those who are unhoused and struggling with meeting probation requirements to meet with their Deputy Probation Officers and receive resources (e.g., mental health, health, housing, substance abuse counseling, employment referrals)
- Expand behavioral health services: Prevent criminalization of behavioral health challenges by expanding availability, accessibility, and coordination of behavioral health services
 - BHRS and Police Community Response Wellness Team Pilot Program (\$913k Measure K): Program that pairs law with a StarVista mental health clinician that can help manage high-risk situations in a way that improves outcomes and public safety
 - Mental Health First Aid (\$200k ARPA): Pilot program offers Mental Health First Aid trainer training to up to 60 city and county staff who, in turn, would train their city and county colleagues
 - Homelessness Provider Mental Health & Wellness Support (\$200k ARPA): Provides grants to community partner organizations that provided crucial services for homeless residents throughout the pandemic

- SMART Program (\$187k Measure K): San Mateo County Mental Health Assessment and Referral Team
- BHRS support for specialty courts and re-entry services for inmates \$6,809,792 (multiple sources): BHRS provides support and services for a number of different specialty courts that aim to prevent criminalization of behavioral health challenges and reduce recidivism and incarceration. (Pathways Mental Health Court, Veteran’s Court; MDUI Court, Mental Health Diversion, Assisted Outpatient Treatment (Laura’s Law), T-Con Conservatorship Investigation, Drug Court, DHS Felony Diversion, and Service Connect) [Probation also supports these specialty courts]

2. End Practices Targeting Black and Brown Individuals

- Deliver prevention programs with non-police personnel: Invest in non-police interventions shown to reduce crime, outreach workers, jobs for youth, and improved neighborhood quality
 - Students With Amazing Goals (\$750k Measure K): Truancy prevention program in the City of East Palo Alto and the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park
 - Multiple Probation programs, including:
 - Use of validated risk instruments to assist in limiting impacts of disproportional representation
 - Provided ongoing training on implicit bias, cultural competency and trauma-informed care to aid in more mindful and objective decision-making
 - Increase investment in community-based organizations focusing on prevention and system-avoidance strategies such as city-led diversion programs
 - Commitment to keeping youth in their homes and natural communities
- Sentencing and bail reform: Hold firm on sentencing and bail reforms that reduce incarceration
 - Use of the Virginia Pretrial Risk Assessment Instrument - Revised (VPRAI-R) to facilitate early release recommendations based on risk rather than ability to pay
- Reform disparity-generating sentencing: Reform sentencing practices that contribute to racial disparities by reforming parole, ending mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent crimes, expanding “second look” policies, and narrowing the use of sentencing enhancements
 - Expansion of secondary educational opportunities for youth in detention and in reentry to facilitate higher learning at the college level (Project Change)
 - Implementation of vocational programs for youth in detention in reentry to promote self-sufficiency that will lead to successful and sustainable employment and a living wage

3. Provide Meaningful Second Chances

- Improved reintegration programming: Expand high-quality educational opportunities during incarceration, provide pre-release enrollment in safety net programs, and provide post-release housing support and employment support
 - The Sheriff's Office partners with Five Keys High School, Canada College, and Stanford University to provide educational opportunities to incarcerated men and women. Five Keys is the only fully-accredited California high school diploma program serving the justice-involved population while incarcerated and upon release in the community; Cañada College provides pre-college orientations and assessments, and is developing non-credit college courses to teach in the jails; and Stanford University has provided its Stanford Jail and Prison Education Project (SJPEP) and Stanford classes for over 6 years in which graduate students facilitate educational seminars that focus on improving literacy and writing skills to incarcerated men and women's using current event topics and themes.
 - Program Services Bureau provides case management and release planning for men and women, including pre-release enrollment in MediCal and warm hand-off to County partners who enroll eligible individuals in benefit programs to ensure continuity of services upon release.
 - In-Custody Case Managers (ICCMs) assess individuals for county reentry services and coordinate release needs with outside partners, including post-release housing support. ICCMs work with program providers in the jail who provide vocational training. Joint case management focuses on employment opportunities, including entry into labor unions, and continuation of accredited vocational trainings and certifications.
- Criminal record reform: Expand expungement of criminal records, and broaden and enforce restrictions on use of criminal records by landlords and employers
 - Continue to ensure compliance with existing juvenile sealing processes as well as ongoing expansion of policies for individuals reentering their communities post probation supervision
 - Assisting, free of charge, in facilitating the reduction and/or expungement of records and early termination for eligible individuals
- Debt forgiveness and payment interception reforms: End collection of fines and fees imposed on individuals who have no realistic ability to repay, and end state diversion of refundable tax credits and child support payments to cover government costs and debts (see Wealth above)
 - Implementation of legislation that waives fines and fees for supervision