



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COURTS

File #: 23-637

Board Meeting Date: 7/25/2023

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Neal I. Taniguchi, Court Executive Officer
Subject: Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission Appointment

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation for two appointments to the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission:

- A) Zahara Agarwal for an initial partial term ending December 31, 2024; and
- B) Ruth Singh for an initial partial term ending December 31, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

For the efficient and effective statutory compliance of the review of juvenile operations in this county, the Court and the Board have agreed that the appointees by the Court to the Juvenile Justice Commission are appointed concurrently by the Board of Supervisors to the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission (JJDPC).

DISCUSSION:

With the recommendation of the Juvenile Judge Susan Irene Etezadi, Presiding Judge Elizabeth K. Lee has appointed Zahara Agarwal and Ruth Singh to the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission for the term prescribed by law. Zahara Agarwal is being recommended for appointment to a seat formerly held by Apollonia Uhila, for an existing partial term ending on December 31, 2024. Ruth Singh is being recommended for appointment to a seat formerly held by Sasha Newton, for an existing partial term ending on December 31, 2025. This is a request that the Board of Supervisors appoints the above-listed commissioners to the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission.

Zahara Agarwal is currently a Junior at Menlo Atherton High School; she lives in the Vintage Oaks neighborhood of Menlo Park. Zahara is a member of the San Mateo County Youth Commission and currently chairs the Youth Commission Civic Engagement Committee. She has been attending JJDPC meetings since last September, as Youth Commission liaison to the JJDPC. Prior to applying to the JJDPC, Zahara worked as a volunteer on the JJDPC Peer Point youth restorative justice-

based diversion project; she is currently active on the Peer Point Executive Board. In addition to her Youth Commission and Peer Point work, Zahara has an impressive volunteer resume, including, among other interesting volunteer roles, helping Judge Susan Breall of the San Francisco City and County Superior Court vet applicants to the Civil Grand Jury, and as a member of Congresswoman Anna Eshoo's Student Advisory Board, Communications & Technology Subcommittee.

Zahara impressed the JJDPC Membership Committee with her desire to increase restorative justice practices in San Mateo County schools, her personal commitment to effecting change through student advocacy and representation, and her ideas for future projects. In May, Zahara presented her work on a website accessible to youth in detention, to connect them with services and programs post-release from detention.

Ruth Singh is a long-time resident of San Mateo County and currently resides in San Bruno. Ruth has been volunteering with the Commission since January and is committed to applying her first-hand lived experience of the challenges within the Juvenile Justice system to effect positive change for youth in detention in our County. Her experiences over the past year with her daughter, who has been at Camp Kemp, have provided her with unique insight into both the positive benefits and the challenges within the juvenile justice system in our county.

Ruth has many years of professional career experience in process improvement and program management. She values working cross-functionally and believes that relationship building is a key factor to effecting change.

The Membership Committee was impressed with Ruth's sensitivity and compassion, her commitment to work to effect change backed up by solid data and robust processes, and her emphasis on maintaining effective communication and strong relationships with partners to overcome challenges on the road to effecting positive change.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.