



County of Sonoma

State of California

Date: November 12, 2024

Item Number: _____

Resolution Number: _____

4/5 Vote Required

Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of The County of Sonoma, State of California,

Recognizing November 2024, as

Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month in Sonoma County

WHEREAS, runaway and homeless youth are young people between 12 and 24 years of age who have the least access to essential opportunities and supports; and

WHEREAS, the prevalence of runaways and homelessness among youth is staggering, with studies suggesting that nationally between 1,600,000 and 2,800,000 youth up to 24 years of age experience homelessness every year, of which an overrepresentation, compared to the general youth population, are youth of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; and

WHEREAS, based on national surveys and California's youth population, an estimated 200,000 youth under 18 years of age, and thousands more who are 18 to 24 years of age are homeless for one or more days each year; and

WHEREAS, based on the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2023 point-in-time homeless count, the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in California is 10,173. California's K-12 educational system, which captures youth doubled-up or couch surfing, reported 8,537 unaccompanied homeless youth, of which 606 were temporarily unsheltered, in the 2022-23 school year; and

WHEREAS, the percentage of unaccompanied homeless youth who are unsheltered in California stands at 68.2 percent, which is the second highest in the country. California also has

29 percent of the homeless youth in the country, the largest number of homeless youths of any state; and

WHEREAS, runaway and homeless youth flee conflict, abuse, neglect, poverty in their homes.

They have become disconnected from educational systems and the workforce, and do not have the skills and financial resources to live on their own. The factors impacting youth homelessness are complex and differ from those impacting other homeless populations; and

WHEREAS, runaway and homeless youth who live on the street are victims of physical abuse, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and crime in untold numbers. An estimated 300,000 youth are either victims or at risk of becoming victims of the commercial sexual exploitation of children each year, which sixty percent of these victimized children are homeless; and

WHEREAS, homeless youth tend to have started using drugs at a younger age, often before 15 years of age. Early drug use and abuse is predictive of serious adult addiction problems and long-term homelessness; and

WHEREAS, youths who “age out” of the foster care system are at an increased risk of homelessness, and represent an estimated 20 percent of the 20,000 youth who leave foster care and are currently homeless; and

WHEREAS, in partnership with the Sonoma County Office of Education, the Department of Health Services’ Crisis Assessment, Prevention & Education (CAPE) team responds to Sonoma County high schools for crisis responses. The CAPE team provides school-based behavioral health and substance use support and interventions to students, including students at risk of or experiencing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, providing safe, stable, and permanent housing for runaway and homeless youth is a family, community, state, and national priority, and homeless youth are considered one of the unique populations in the homeless community by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness; and

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WHEREAS, awareness of the tragedy of youth experiencing homelessness and its causes must be heightened to ensure greater support for effective programs aimed at preventing homelessness and helping youth remain off the streets.

Now, Therefore, be it Resolved, that the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors hereby designates the month of November 2024 as California Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month.

Supervisors:

Gorin:

Coursey:

Gore:

Hopkins:

Rabbitt:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

So Ordered.