



BERKELEY CITY COUNCILMEMBER
TERRY TAPLÍN
DISTRICT 2

CONSENT CALENDAR
May 30, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Taplin, Councilmember Harrison (co-sponsor),
Councilmember Hahn (co-sponsor)

Subject: Office of Racial Equity: Re-Entry Employment and Guaranteed Income Programs

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager to conduct a feasibility study on funding and operating a Re-entry Employment Program and to seek grant funding for a Guaranteed Income pilot program, following operational recommendations in the Reimagining Public Safety process. In addition, the City Manager's Office, and subsequently an Office of Racial Equity as appropriate, shall periodically report on performance metrics, administrative capacity, and fiscal sustainability for partnering CBOs and other NGOs performing violence prevention services, mental health crisis responses, and any other services under the auspices of Reimagining Community Safety.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The City Council's omnibus budget referral for Reimagining Public Safety passed on May 5, 2022 included \$1M for staffing the Office of Racial Equity, and \$100,000 for Grant Writing Services. Implementing this recommendation would be contingent on those funds.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Studying employment and poverty reduction programs in the Office of Racial Equity is a Strategic Plan Priority Project, advancing our goal to create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared city.

Poverty, crime, and racial inequality are deeply interconnected phenomena throughout US history. In particular, the lack of employment opportunities for the formerly incarcerated increases recidivism, fueling a vicious cycle of repeated offenses, high crime and poverty in majority-minority communities.

Research has generally found that high-quality jobs with good wages are most effective at reducing recidivism, particularly for those who have served prison sentences for property crimes.¹ In addition to re-entry programs, cash transfer programs from Kenya to California (colloquially dubbed "basic" or "guaranteed income") have repeatedly been shown to successfully reduce the social and psychological impacts of poverty, and a

¹ Yu, T. (2018). Employment and Recidivism. *Evidence Based Policy Society*. Retrieved from <https://www.ebpsociety.org/blog/education/297-employment-recidivism>

new guaranteed income pilot program in Alachua County, Florida is specifically aimed at reducing recidivism.²

Cities across the country have seen remarkable success with such programs. The City of Chicago supports capital investment for a Green ReEntry program managed by the nonprofits Chicago CRED and the Inner-City Muslim Action Network, which provides vocational training for skilled trades, weekend programs, and housing assistance for formerly incarcerated individuals.³ In 2019, former Mayor Michael Tubbs launched the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) pilot program. SEED provides \$500 per month for two years to 125 randomly selected residents of Stockton in neighborhoods with below median income. In a one-year follow-up study, recipients reported improved mental health, financial stability, and employment opportunities.⁴

BACKGROUND

In June 2020, the City Council passed a budget referral authored by Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani to establish a framework for a new Office of Racial Equity within the Office of the City Manager.⁵ This is consistent with best practices in neighboring cities, such as Oakland and San Francisco, which have recently established such an office. The duties of such an office can be manifold, but a primary responsibility should be to support CBOs and programs that provide cash assistance, workforce development and employment opportunities for the formerly incarcerated to reduce recidivism (similar to Berkeley YouthWorks).

The City of Oakland's Guaranteed Income pilot provides monthly cash payments to a randomly selected pool of low-income residents, and is funded entirely through private philanthropic donations, with collaborative management by the City and nonprofit agencies.⁶

On May 5, 2022, the Berkeley City Council passed a budget referral to advance Reimagining Public Safety initiatives, which included \$100,000 for grant writing services, and slightly over \$1 million for staffing a new Office of Racial Equity.⁷ These

² McDonough, S. (2022). A bold new experiment out of Florida: Guaranteed income for the formerly incarcerated. Vox. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/22911023/ubi-guaranteed-income-prison-florida>

³ ABC7 Chicago. (2020). Chicago Re-Entry Program Rebuilds Lives with Hands-On Training. ABC News. Retrieved from <https://abc7chicago.com/iman-inner-city-muslim-action-network-job-training-reentry-program/5988288/>

⁴ West, S. et al. (2020). Preliminary Analysis: SEED's First Year. *Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration*. Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6039d612b17d055cac14070f/t/603ef1194c474b329f33c329/1614737690661/SEED_Preliminary+Analysis-SEEDs+First+Year_Final+Report_Individual+Pages+-2.pdf

⁵ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2020/06_June/Documents/06-09_Annotated_Agenda_4pm_pdf.aspx

⁶ <https://oaklandresilientfamilies.org/about>

⁷ https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/2022-05-05%20Special%20Item%2001a%20Fulfilling%20the%20Promise%20of%20Berkeley_0.pdf

services could assist in researching and soliciting funding for these and other promising programs to improve public safety and advance economic justice.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

None.

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