



SAN JOAQUIN
VALLEY
HEALTH FUND

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POLICY PLATFORM 2017

As people of the San Joaquin Valley, we know the destinies of our counties are intertwined. If the Valley does well, California does well, but the Valley faces an urgent crisis of poor health outcomes.

The Valley is the largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the nation. Yet, our families cannot afford enough food, and are going hungry. California is the wealthiest state in the nation, and the Valley produces \$8.1 billion in crops, yet nearly 40% of our children live in poverty. Our neighbors in Silicon Valley are considered the technology and innovation capital of the world, yet thousands of people in the San Joaquin Valley cannot get clean drinking water.

Communities are mobilizing and lifting-up the voices of those most impacted in the Valley including those who are often overlooked, marginalized, or living in communities with limited political representation. Because the Valley is impacted by multiple issues, it is critical that we take a comprehensive approach that integrates key policies ranging from health coverage to early childhood investment to affordable housing.

The following is a brief overview of key policy priorities that done together can fundamentally build a healthier future for diverse communities in the San Joaquin Valley.

HEALTH COVERAGE

The San Joaquin Valley has deeply benefitted from the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). It has resulted in reductions in number of uninsured, expansion of enrollees in the Medi-Cal program, availability of life-saving medical care, reductions in costly emergency room care, and job growth with the Covered California Call Center.

- ✓ Support the Affordable Care Act and Health for All Kids in California to ensure healthcare for every Californian regardless of immigration status
- ✓ Continue strengthening Medi-Cal and supporting investments in transition-related healthcare for transgender Californians
- ✓ Address the shortage of medical providers and specialists in the region

ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER

The Valley has been without safe, affordable and reliable drinking water for decades. Groundwater contamination impacts the safety and cost of drinking water and water systems serving predominantly Latino and low-income communities have disproportionately high occurrences of arsenic and nitrate contamination.

- ✓ Support permanent and interim solutions to deliver safe drinking water to small, disadvantaged communities, schools, and low-income households
- ✓ Improve the state's data collection and management to track and manage access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation, including small and private wells
- ✓ Consider a drinking water fee to support water infrastructure, Operations and Maintenance (O&M), affordability programs, adequate agency staffing, and technical assistance for disadvantaged communities

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

By 2050, it is projected the San Joaquin Valley will be home to more than a quarter of California's population. Yet, there is fundamental lack of affordable housing. Recent data shows that 82.47% of low income and extremely low income renters pay over 30% of their income on housing, and 60.21% pay over 50% of their income on housing. Approximately, 86,172 affordable rental homes are needed in Fresno, Kern, and Stanislaus Counties alone and yet these counties have lost \$62 million in affordable housing funding, a 220% reduction, since 2008. Furthermore, in the Valley, exclusionary zoning practices exacerbate racial and economic segregation and have led to the development of more racially concentrated areas of poverty.

- ✓ Change land use and zoning regulations to provide quality housing options
- ✓ Strengthen the development of affordable housing and rehabilitation of existing housing.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Research shows the importance of a child’s first five years of development and how early childhood education can have a lasting impact on the success of a child. Yet, the percentages of eligible 3 and 4 year olds who are enrolled in a preschool program have consistently been lower in the San Joaquin Valley counties. For instance, in 2016 Fresno ranked 55 out of the 58 counties in California with regard to preschool enrollment.

- ✓ Support early childhood education, including unique pre-school programs that are customized to meet local community needs
- ✓ Increase outreach to communities who have traditionally under-utilized early childhood education programs

IMMIGRANTS

Our Valley region, one of the biggest economic engines of the state, is also home to the highest concentration of immigrants in CA—they make up 42% of the agricultural workforce and 11% of the region’s overall workforce, and almost one quarter own their homes. However, the regional capacity to serve them is disturbingly inadequate and their vulnerability to fraud, unscrupulous employers and federal/local policies that run counter to California law.

- ✓ Support the implementation of immigrant integration measures
- ✓ Prioritize adult education, English as a Second Language and vocational training
- ✓ Increase the availability of naturalization classes to facilitate citizenship
- ✓ Support a sanctuary movement that includes all entities who receive state funds
- ✓ Support legal and BIA providers offering legal assistance against deportation

NUTRITION AND AVAILABILITY TO HEALTHY FOODS

Food is a basic necessity and a human right. In the Valley, a region of incredible agricultural bounty, vulnerable families live in food deserts. It is an injustice that the people that harvest fresh fruits and vegetables are unable to enjoy nutritious food and have children that go to school hungry.

- ✓ Promote healthier school options at mealtime for children
- ✓ Provide incentives for farmers who donate to food banks
- ✓ Eliminate restrictions on creating value from produce that is gleaned
- ✓ Facilitate selling food grown in backyards and at schools to increase food distribution
- ✓ Support small-scale growing and stop the consolidation of small farms

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM PESTICIDE EXPOSURE

From gestation through school years, children in the Valley are disproportionately exposed to pesticides, which can lead to life-long health and learning problems. Studies have documented that prenatal and early childhood pesticide exposure can alter brain structure, causing autism, ADHD, and other developmental disorders; decrease IQ; cause and trigger asthma; and increase risk of cancer.

- ✓ Have the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR) adopt regulations that better protect children from harmful agricultural pesticides currently used near schools and day care centers, and enact pesticide-free buffer zones of at least 1 mile
- ✓ Fund the CDPR to annually update the California Department of Public Health's 2014 report, which documented the use of "pesticides of public health concern" within a ¼ mile of schools
- ✓ Develop funding, incentives, and technical assistance to encourage widespread adoption of child-safe farming practices that promote soil health

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Our communities and neighborhoods experience traumatic events which impact the health and well-being of boys and men of color. As an example, in San Joaquin County, of the homicides that occurred in the last 28 years, 72% were boys and men of color.

- ✓ Support community-based re-entry programs and services, including workforce development, trauma-informed care, education, and family reunification
- ✓ Decriminalize school campuses and implement restorative justice practices

EDUCATION

The Valley has continuing challenges with academic achievement, college access, and career readiness for its students. Researchers have found that students who are enrolled in ethnic studies courses demonstrate improvement in attendance by 21 percentage points, grade-point average by 1.4 points, and on average earn 23 more credits towards graduation compared to other students. Proper implementation of AB2016 (signed into law in 2016) and the Local Control Funding Formula is critical.

- ✓ Support school districts to implement the state adopted ethnic studies curriculum, including state-wide standards and teacher training
- ✓ Include LGBT+ anti-bullying and sensitivity training for all on-campus staff
- ✓ Define how schools address challenges around parent engagement; early warning/intervention systems; health care; and expanded learning
- ✓ Restore and scale up the California Department of Education Healthy Start Initiative

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The health of communities is directly impacted by historic environmental injustices. From the worst air pollution, two of California's three hazardous waste landfills being in low-income Latino farm worker communities, and poor land use/water planning. Furthermore, climate change is impacting vulnerable communities in the Valley that are already facing cumulative health impacts.

- ✓ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions while ensuring climate change policies do not steer investments away from disadvantaged unincorporated and vulnerable communities
- ✓ Work to ensure there are no landfills in low-income communities
- ✓ Support the transition away from fossil fuels and fracking
- ✓ Support adequate drinking water and wastewater services in existing communities prior to new developments and prohibit development in areas that lack drinking water
- ✓ Support environmental impacts of projects that consume habitat, agricultural land or other open space, with mitigation ratios of at least 1:1 for farmland and higher ratios as appropriate for habitat

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been victims of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner. In the Valley, intimate partner violence intersects with issues which complicate a victim's ability to find safety. For example, citizenship status can keep a victim from coming forward and the depressed economy can make it difficult for a victim to provide for their family.

- ✓ Support intimate partner violence agencies regardless of legal status
- ✓ Strengthen whole family efforts, including restorative justice practices

PREVENTING ADOLESCENCE RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

1 in 3 adolescent's nationwide report experiencing emotional, verbal, physical or sexual abuse in a dating relationship. Almost half of students suffering the trauma of dating abuse report that some of it occurred on school grounds. School policies can create a brighter, safer future for young people to prevent adolescent relationship abuse.

- ✓ Encourage schools to incorporate curriculum on healthy relationships and dating abuse into the health education program or other courses as required by the California Healthy Youth Act and ensure staff is properly trained

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

The Healthy Youth Act was passed in 2015 to ensure teens have access within public schools to comprehensive sexual health education that is unbiased, medically accurate, and linguistically accessible. Implementation of policies are often ignored creating a gap between state standards and adolescents knowledge of sexual and reproductive health.

- ✓ Enforce implementation of state policies, including The Healthy Youth Act
- ✓ Advance reproductive justice policies

TRANSPORTATION JUSTICE

Transportation justice includes access to transit and active transportation infrastructure for California's most vulnerable communities. For low-income families, transportation is the second largest expense after housing as they work to maintain unreliable vehicles, pay high gas prices, or rely on expensive rides that may not always be safe.

- ✓ Support disadvantaged communities in Active Transportation Program
- ✓ Prioritize the needs of existing communities over infrastructure to support greenfield development and new towns
- ✓ Prioritize community connectivity, complete streets, transit and van pools, car share programs in rural communities, and active transportation infrastructure
- ✓ Support transit operations to maintain high levels of service including weekend and overnight bus service and routes between county communities and between counties
- ✓ Focus on policies, planning, and funding that supports “access by proximity” and creates resource-rich communities that locate housing, jobs, and amenities together Proactively mitigate the environmental impacts of transportation projects by developing and funding Regional Advance Mitigation Planning (RAMP) programs