

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY HEALTH FUND

IHHEEL POLICY PLATFORM 2023

DIGITAL DIVIDE • IMMIGRATION • HEALTH
HOUSING • EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE • LAND USE & PLANNING



THE CENTER
at Sierra Health Foundation



In 2014, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation launched the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund (SJVHF), an ambitious community-first funder collaborative in response to the deep inequities in health, social and economic outcomes throughout California's San Joaquin Valley. Prior to its launch, listening sessions and community meetings confirmed a need for sustained grantmaking, organizational capacity building, investment in community leadership, and respect for the needs, ideas and hopes of those living in the region. The Center has since grown the fund into a dynamic partnership of more than 40 national and California funders and more than 160 community partner organizations dedicated to advancing health and racial equity in one of the state's most under-invested regions.

With an explicit emphasis on community organizing and systems change to address health and racial disparities, the SJVHF's groundbreaking community-driven model leverages community, philanthropic and legislative leadership partnerships to advance progressive shifts in policy and practice. The collaborative's grantmaking, networking, capacity building and regional power-building activities focus on growing inclusive communities, increasing opportunity and promoting civic participation.

Community leaders who inform advocacy and grantmaking strategies are truly essential to the success of this work. The SJVHF Policy Committee, comprised of community-based partners, is built on this ideal to transform grantmaking in collaboration, centering equity and community voice to promote civic engagement and achieve systems change. Working through subcommittees, the Policy Committee adopted the following policy framework: Immigration, Health, Housing, Education, Environmental Justice, Land Use and Planning (IHHEEL) and Digital Divide. Each priority area in their Policy Platform includes a vision, the data behind the need to pursue the vision, and pathways toward clear outcomes.

This year, as we shift from COVID-19 response to recovery, the Policy Platform has remained strong and, in many areas, strengthened as it seeks to find solutions to the issues that were exacerbated during the pandemic, as well as address new problems that arose in its aftermath. As in the past, access to economic opportunities, or the lack thereof, significantly impacts economically vulnerable families. The ongoing efforts to increase economic mobility and opportunity and reduce poverty in the region is a theme that cuts across all the areas.

The 2023 Policy Platform is bold, reflecting the resiliency of the people and communities of the San Joaquin Valley, as well as their commitment to grassroots organizing. Leaders continue to pave the path to advance health and racial equity. This platform is more than a document; it serves as a year-round organizing tool that fuels partners' local, regional and statewide advocacy and ongoing partnerships with impacted communities, elected representatives and policymakers.

Underpinning these policy recommendations is an acknowledgement of the intersectionality of the priorities for underserved San Joaquin Valley communities, the critical importance of community organizing and power-building, and the key roles economic development and access to opportunity play in obtaining and sustaining health and racial equity.

With deep gratitude to the SJVHF Policy Committee, Co-Chairs and Subcommittees, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation team, and the dedicated funder and community partner organizations and their constituencies who make the work of the SJVHF possible, we proudly present the 2023 San Joaquin Valley Health Fund Policy Platform. The Valley continues to rise!



Chet P. Hewitt
President and CEO
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SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

HEALTH FUND

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Digital Divide Policy Platform

VISION

We envision all disadvantaged communities that are impacted by economic, health and environmental burdens in the San Joaquin Valley have access to reliable, affordable, and high-quality broadband internet services to further civic engagement, student success, economic development and opportunity, and access to essential services.

BACKGROUND

For decades, private industry and, to an extent, local, state, and federal government institutions have under invested in these low-income communities in San Joaquin Valley through systemic racism and disparate treatment. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how ill-prepared society is to respond to the basic needs of low-income residents.

As a result, there are significant barriers for residents to obtaining high-speed broadband service, further limiting their options to access essential services and information. San Joaquin Valley communities remain without the necessary infrastructure to create alternative and innovative economic opportunities for themselves, deepening the persistent generational wealth gap between white and nonwhite communities. Also, unreliable, and expensive broadband access, coupled with language and other barriers, limits opportunities among low-income residents to engage with their elected and appointed representatives as decisions are made.

The need to extend broadband into the Valley is evidenced by the leadership of the California Public Utilities Commission, the California Department of Technology, the California Legislature, educational institutions, California Forward and the Governor's executive order requiring state agencies to coordinate efforts. Consensus principles endorsed by these, and many other groups have already formulated a viable path forward.

To address these disparities in broadband access, we stand united in our call to:

PATHWAY

- Educate agencies, decision-makers, and the public on the need to extend broadband internet services into San Joaquin Valley communities.
- Ensure that individuals impacted by the lack of broadband services can be engaged in shaping sustainable solutions for current and future needs.
- Promote opportunities to shape sustainable solutions including designation of service providers as public utility, establishment of municipal and/or educational broadband service

offerings in the region and continued development of broadband service provider infrastructure to expand affordable and reliable coverage.

- Engage as the telecommunications landscape evolves (as the broadband networks constructed today become the essential public utilities of the future) with local and tribal networks assuming the role of voice and broadband essential service providers.
- Educate policymakers on the need for policy solutions at the federal, state, county, municipal and school board levels to promote greater infrastructure, digital literacy, and affordable and reliable broadband service options for residents.
- Engage partners and local community-based organizations to advocate and organize residents to have their needs, concerns and desired outcomes realized.
- Inform community leaders about digital literacy opportunities and the availability of affordable broadband services, such as those supported by the federal Affordable Connectivity Plan.
- Prioritize increased funding and investments in infrastructure and services, digital literacy, and affordable and reliable broadband offerings from public, private, and philanthropic sectors.
- Advocate for a network study to demonstrate the need and what is possible with strong investments.
- Educate communities on the need for backup power sources.

Education Policy Platform

VISION

We envision all San Joaquin Valley communities having equitable, inclusive, safe, autonomous, and just as a cornerstone of a holistic, and effective educational system, in the face of systemic racism, inequality, institutional exclusion and redlining. We envision students having real-world knowledge and skills, and their diversity is celebrated and centered. Trauma-informed and restorative practices, leadership, and content reflect the hopes of the communities served, students and families are equipped to advocate for their needs and of their communities, and students and families are co-creators of the campus community. Schools are trusted anchors for neighborhood and community development. State and local education agencies are transparent, accountable, and democratic. All Californians are instilled with a shared sense of empowerment and responsibility for our most vulnerable.

BACKGROUND

The San Joaquin Valley is home to more than 10% of California's public-school students (800,000+) and to one of the highest proportions of English Learners. Among the youngest students, almost 75% of eligible 3-year-olds and 20% of eligible 4-year-olds are not enrolled in government-sponsored preschool programs. These children are missing a strong start to their educational journey. Once in the K-12 system, these same students experience the worst outcomes in math and language arts proficiency, with the lowest rates among Southeast Asian, African American/Black students, Hispanic/Latino and American Indian/Alaska Native students. LGBTQ+ students often face a hostile school climate with little support, where officials attempt to stymie their expression and being.

Disengagement among students can, in part, be attributed to curricula that do not include them and a teaching cohort that does not reflect their experiences. We need stronger and wider hiring recruitment of teachers and more inclusive K-12 ethnic studies curricula. In addition, parents do not feel connected and involved with their kids' schools. The average expulsion rate of 2.25 per 1,000 students is double the statewide average.

With a juvenile felony arrest rate higher in the Valley than other regions of the state, and disparities existing among Hispanic/Latino, African American and Southeast Asian groups, this contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline for disadvantaged students, thus contributing to the disproportionate dropout rate. Among the high school class of 2015, one in 10 (10.8%) San Joaquin Valley students failed to graduate. Focusing on community integration of systems-impacted youth must be a high priority as California's Department of Juvenile Justice closes in June 2023.

COVID-19 exacerbated existing inequities, such as access to broadband, retaining teachers and addressing behavioral health of our students. Recovery requires additional resources and capacity in the Valley, and concentrated, organized efforts to secure sufficient funding for student services and support. Also needed are increased social-emotional learning opportunities, green spaces free from toxins and other efforts that confront the challenges of systemic inequities and racism.

The San Joaquin Valley celebrates its role as a land of refugees and opportunities. From those who came before to new arrivals from Southeast and South Asia, Central America and indigenous communities of Mexico, our challenge is to advance an approach to education that centers communities, learning and opportunities.

PATHWAY

To address these educational disparities, we stand united in our call to:

ENHANCE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Ensure that San Joaquin Valley grantees in the California Community Schools Partnership Program are improving school responsiveness to student and family needs and organizing school and community resources to address barriers to learning.
- Fully leverage opportunities from the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative through school-linked partnership and capacity grants to provide equitable, appropriate, timely and accessible services for emerging and existing behavioral health (mental health and substance use) needs for children and youth ages 0-25.
- Decriminalize school campuses and implement restorative justice practices and trauma-informed care to create welcoming schools that foster strong community engagement.
- Develop innovative public-private partnerships and legislation to increase pay for educators from PreK to 12th grade to attract and retain the best multilingual education workforce.
- Increase participation of community, parents, and students in developing Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP) to ensure fiscal transparency and increased assurances that students receive benefits of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).
- Build an inclusive and empathetic system for students, families, and communities to report and have hate incidents and microaggressions by other students, faculty and staff investigated thoroughly in a process that centers the experiences of students.

ENSURE ONGOING FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR QUALITY AND EQUITABLE PRE-K-12 SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

- Ensure funding and support for Universal Preschool and mixed PreK-3 delivery systems in ways that prevent gutting of the early education system for children ages 0-2.
- Increase investments in locally informed and culturally competent academic strategies that help place students on a path to achieving and maintaining proficiency by the third grade,

including leveraging dual-immersion opportunities as early as PreK when language acquisition is most effective.

- Ensure equitable funding for counties as they take on the burden of integrating youth in juvenile justice systems with the closure of the Department of Juvenile Justice in June 2023.
- Support investments in partnerships and programs that provide students with access to high-quality opportunities that enhance their academic programs through after-school programs, arts, music, sports, access to healthy food and safe drinking water.
- Adopt a new rate system for childcare that covers the true cost of providing childcare to help attract and retain the current childcare workforce.
- Increase funding and support long-term investments in dating and sexual violence prevention education to improve student safety and interrupt the cycle of violence.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: ENSURE PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE TRAINED AND RECRUITED FOR EDUCATION POSITIONS AT ALL GRADE LEVELS

- Increase recruitment of people of color into education professions and ensure alignment between teacher preparation programs and on-the-job training to equip teachers with tools to implement restorative and culturally and trauma-informed disciplinary practices. In addition, school staff should be trained in the delivery of LGBTQ+ and culturally competent and sensitive curriculum and instructional practices, including a comprehensive, unbiased sexual health curriculum as required by the Healthy Youth Act, as well as healthy living practices as required by the Local School Wellness Policy.
- Increase investments and availability of quality early childhood programs, facilities and staff that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and designed to meet the needs of vulnerable and underserved communities.
- Establish grant programs and other incentives for higher education institutions to develop and implement the PreK-3rd early childhood education specialist credential and create apprenticeship programs to increase teacher diversity.
- Invest in adult education and training to build a sustainable workforce that includes support for community-based re-entry programs.
- Provide access to community college vocational training for all immigrants regardless of immigration status.

ENHANCE CURRICULUM FOCUSED ON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

- Support school-based social-emotional learning curriculum and incentivize outdoor activities, including environmental and experiential education, to increase protective factors and reduce risk factors associated with negative mental health outcomes for all youth.
- Address disparities in services and outcomes for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, especially children from marginalized ethnic/racial populations.

- Ensure curriculum on healthy relationships and dating abuse is included in health education programs or other appropriate courses at middle and high schools as required by the California Healthy Youth Act.

Environmental Justice Policy Platform

VISION

Our vision is that everyone in San Joaquin Valley has clean air, clean food, and clean drinking water. Improved health and quality of life; and just, ecological, climate-resilient industries and farming practices.

BACKGROUND

In vibrant California, over four million San Joaquin Valley residents are disproportionately exposed to multiple hazardous contaminants, including unsafe drinking water, pesticides, and air pollution. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic, rampant wildfires, and historic flooding further heightened inequities and disproportionately impacted frontline and marginalized communities. To equitably advance environmental justice and climate resiliency we center racial equity. Proposed funding and response strategies must therefore be universally targeted toward these vulnerable communities, with affected community members driving the vision for solutions.

PATHWAY

To address these environmental disparities, we stand united in our call around the following:

ENSURE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

- Ensure that all California residents have a direct role in the decision-making process to design and implement the environmental and social policies that impact them.
- Require government agencies comply with state and federal civil rights and language access laws and policies.
- Make certain that government agencies use information about cumulative health impacts in all regulatory and permitting decisions.
- Guarantee that adequate stockpile of personal protective equipment is distributed to farmworkers during emergencies, such as wildfires or disease outbreaks.

PROVIDE CLEAN AND AFFORDABLE DRINKING WATER

- Support the successful implementation of the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund for San Joaquin Valley communities with contaminated and/or unaffordable drinking water, including those reliant on private wells, to secure interim solutions and progress on the path to long-term solutions.

- Protect the Valley’s groundwater by implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act in a manner that preserves access to safe water for communities, holds agriculture and oil companies accountable to pay for drinking water solutions through implementation of the Central Valley Basin Plan Amendment, and promoting proactive drought planning.

REDUCE AIR POLLUTION AND SUPPORT CLIMATE JUSTICE

- Reduce air pollution from the region’s largest sources, such as oil and gas facilities, agricultural burning, dairies, biomass plants, pesticide-treated agricultural fields, vehicle transportation and magnet sources. Require the use of best available control technologies on these sources.
- Work with government agencies to prioritize direct emission reductions, and reduce reliance on voluntary programs, taxpayer-funded incentives, and credit-based systems.
- Strengthen enforcement, community engagement and regulations on toxic air emissions. Establish zero emission health and safety zones around homes, schools, and hospitals.
- Advocate for timely, culturally appropriate notification systems that alert the public to unsafe levels of air pollution. Provide information and direct resources for people to protect themselves, such as air filters and protective equipment.
- Support the creation and implementation of plans for a just transition from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy and sustainable, equitable storage.
- Ensure investments meaningfully improve conditions and infrastructure and expand reforestation and urban greenery. Include synthetic pesticide and fertilizer emissions in all climate-related plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, toxic air contaminants, volatile organic compounds, and co-pollutants.
- End the discriminatory permitting of waste disposal facilities in low-income communities of color.

PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS TO GREEN SPACES

- Ensure equitable access to outdoor spaces for low-income and rural communities of color, disabled or special-needs residents, and youth, thus reducing the park-to-population ratio in the San Joaquin Valley.
- Develop green spaces near schools in underserved communities to promote environmental literacy, healthy alternatives to out-of-school time, and opportunities for vocational and hands-on learning to fill the anticipated need for a “greener” workforce in the future.

PROTECT COMMUNITIES FROM TOXIC PESTICIDE EXPOSURE

- Restrict the use of the carcinogenic fumigant pesticide 1,3-dichloropropene.
- Quickly phase out the most hazardous, drift-prone and outdated agricultural pesticides in use in California, including organophosphates and fumigant pesticides.

- Establish the public’s right to know, in advance, about upcoming applications of hazardous pesticides.
- Make the Department of Pesticide Regulation and County Agricultural Commissioner’s more transparent and publicly accountable to the communities they serve.

SUPPORT SMALL FARMERS AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

- Ensure California’s local food producers have access to clean, safe water, financial relief and education.
- Improve access to land for California’s small scale, beginning and underserved producers.
- Ensure California’s small scale, beginning and underserved farmers have equitable access to capital and infrastructure.
- Dedicate funds for technical assistance and support for small- and mid-scale farmers, particularly historically underserved farmers, and farmers from environmental justice communities, to promote the widespread adoption of ecological farming practices that stimulate soil health, protect air, and water quality and support the resilience of Central Valley farms in the face of global climate change.

Health Policy Platform

VISION

Our vision is to strengthen California’s commitment to and momentum toward increased access to high quality, affordable, culturally, and linguistically appropriate physical and behavioral health services regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or other social, economic, and demographic factors so that every Californian can thrive.

BACKGROUND

The San Joaquin Valley is disparately impacted by environmental, economic, social, and access-to-care obstacles and adverse conditions that negatively affect the health of residents. San Joaquin Valley residents face many barriers including fear of immigration-related risks, lack of access to technology and insufficient or unreliable broadband, language barriers, discrimination, and difficulty accessing health services, including to behavioral health, mental health, and dental care.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequities for health care access and health outcomes experienced by San Joaquin Valley residents. In 2020, the leading cause of death for residents was COVID-19. Access to testing, vaccinations and relief resources lagged in the Valley, while residents remained at a disproportionate risk of becoming ill and dying of COVID-19. Further, the federal pandemic responses excluded many immigrant families and denied support for many who needed it most.

Community members in the Valley continue to lack trust in the institutions that should provide the safety nets for their well-being. It’s easy to understand why. Disparities in access, especially in primary and behavioral health continue and there’s a lack of providers to deliver critical care services. The Valley also suffers from a severe shortage of providers. For example, in 2019 the ratio of primary care physicians in the San Joaquin Valley was 39 per 100,000, and 20% below the state average of 50 primary care physicians per 100,000. Despite expanding Medi-Cal eligibility for more residents, regardless of immigration status and age, this does not translate to full coverage.

Four of the eight counties that comprise the region — Madera, Fresno, Tulare, and Kern — rank among the bottom 10 counties for health outcomes. Two out of every five (44% or 1.8 million) of the 4.2 million people who live in the Valley are enrolled in Medi-Cal. As of 2023, the average life expectancy ranged from 77.5 to 79.7 years, about the same as the statewide average life expectancy of 79 years and is significantly lower than previous years, where the state average was 81.5, in 2019. Significant disparities remain in life expectancy across demographic groups

and neighborhoods, reflecting a cumulative impact of social, economic, and environmental factors.

PATHWAY

To address health disparities at the local, regional, state, and federal levels, we stand united in our call to:

ENHANCE FUNDING FOR QUALITY PREVENTIVE PRIMARY CARE, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, AND DENTAL CARE AND OTHER RELATED SERVICES

- Increase and expand investments in culturally and linguistically appropriate primary care that is effective, equitable, and patient-centered and no-cost to community members of diverse backgrounds, practices, gender identification, of low-income, immigration and housing status.
- Continue to ensure equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines, long COVID-19, and other relief resources to those hardest hit by the virus after the public health emergency ends.
- Support sustained funding for local oral health programs and implementation of county oral health improvement plans that increase public awareness of the importance of oral health and improve access to and utilization of dental services.
- Increase and expand the use of county agencies' funds from the Mental Health Services Act and state Innovation Funds to promote locally and culturally informed efforts to address mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse.
- Increase and extend subsidies in Covered California for all residents beyond the short-term federal relief in the American Relief Act.

LEVERAGE FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING TO ADDRESS THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

- Ensure that CalAIM is fully realized and that the needs and social drivers of health of Medi-Cal members are adequately addressed by Medi-Cal managed care plans in partnership with community-based organizations and local agencies.
- Ensure that local health jurisdictions and community-based organizations in the Valley leverage all available funding streams (e.g., Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, etc.) for youth and adults to access behavioral health support.
- Support flexible policies so unrestricted funds will address food security issues experienced by families and individuals, while seeking investments to improve the food access infrastructure for local products to be served in school meals as well as incorporate farm-to-fork, farm-school, gleaning, WIC, and Senior Farmer Market programs.
- Inform all individuals of language assistance services in health care services clearly and in their preferred language, verbally and in writing, to facilitate timely access.
- Support federal, state, and local level expansion of food security programs where recipients can use benefits to purchase nutritious hot or prepared foods, as some recipients are unhoused and have challenges in preparing food from raw ingredients.

- Support federal comprehensive immigration reform that includes pathways to citizenship and eligibility for federal benefits. Educate immigrant community on the status of the public charge regulations and encourage participation in health and nutrition programs.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: FUND, TRAIN, AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS TO BRIDGE THE GAP IN THE DELIVERY OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

- Leverage the Community Health Worker/Promotores/Representatives Medi-Cal benefit so members and uninsured populations navigate healthcare access. These healthcare workers serve as a bridge between the formal healthcare system and vulnerable communities.
- Expand funding to enact policies that support non-clinical community-based organizations and a health workforce pipeline to train and prepare students from underrepresented backgrounds for health professions.

ENSURE HOSPITAL COMMUNITY BENEFIT PROGRAMS ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

- Raise standards for hospital community benefit agreements so that more investments are made to improve services and resources for the communities they serve, such as in physical, technological, and human infrastructure.

ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY AND INVESTMENTS IN JUSTICE POLICIES THAT ADVOCATE FOR REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM, VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

- Advocate for a health insurance system that is inclusive of reproductive health and abortion services and expand investments and eligibility in the Medi-Cal and Affordable Care Act programs to close the health care gap for all uninsured residents.
- Strengthen accountability and investments that support the local implementation of comprehensive gender and reproductive justice policies.
- Advance the collection of SOGIE (sexual orientation/gender identity and expression) data, to better understand the challenges and needs of community members, address inequities, and ensure their safety and well-being.
- Increase funding and long-term support for domestic violence and sexual violence prevention education to interrupt the cycle of violence.

ENSURE STUDENT WELLNESS AT ALL GRADE LEVELS PRE-K – 12

- Support implementation of school nutrition standards that align with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guideline for Americans.
- Promote a more just food system that seeks to source locally with increased investments in infrastructure.

Housing Policy Platform

VISION

Our vision is that San Joaquin Valley residents, especially the most vulnerable, have full access to safe, accessible, and permanently affordable housing. We will reach this goal by promoting mixed-use developments, preserving existing affordable housing, and protecting residents through improved housing affordability, housing quality and home ownership and community ownership opportunities.

BACKGROUND

Agricultural land in the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund is the source of livelihood for many residents, tens of billions of dollars a year in economic contribution and food for the nation. Yet, in this land of abundance, more than 70% of low-income residents pay 50% or more of their income on rent or mortgages.

PATHWAY

To address these housing disparities, we are united in our call to:

- Actively address segregation by securing true housing choice through incentivizing development in growth areas to facilitate and incorporate housing opportunities for all.
- Support policies and investments that produce new affordable housing, preserve existing affordable housing, and protect residents for improved housing affordability, housing quality and home ownership opportunities. Preserve existing housing stock—especially mobile home parks—and provide means for low-income homeowners to repair or replace their homes.
- Advance measures and policies that make affordable housing more accessible, such as a universal application in multiple languages and a statewide database of the availability of affordable housing units in each region.
- Support models of housing development and land management that promote long-term affordability and community control by creating community land trusts, housing cooperatives, and other opportunities for resident ownership and management of housing. There should be a particular focus on housing whose construction or preservation is subsidized with public or philanthropic resources for low and very-low-income communities. Prioritize housing models developed on public land and land value recapture on land that has increased in value due to public investment and other government actions.
- Enforce proactive rental housing inspection rules, promote a baseline inspection of all rental properties, and create a standard registry list of all rental units.

- Protect tenants by strengthening and enforcing local and statewide rent stabilization, just-cause eviction, and source of income discrimination laws. Strengthen and enforce policies that provide housing stability, including eviction moratoria and rental assistance.
- Advocate for enforcement of a strong Community Reinvestment Act that promotes equitable lending to low-income communities of color and rural markets.
- Increase equitable allocation of state and federal funds for housing projects in rural and farmworker communities by creating set-asides within programs like Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities and the Tax Credit program and redefining density, so it works for these communities.
- Increase community understanding of homes as the answer to homelessness and prioritize the development of permanent housing and supportive services that help people struggling with chronic physical and mental health issues maintain stable housing and receive appropriate health care.
- Advocate for policies that remove barriers to housing for those re-entering the community after incarceration (e.g., Fair Chance Housing) and end policies that criminalize homelessness.
- Support the collection of eviction data and the provision of legal aid to prevent undue evictions, displacement, and homelessness.
- Rally behind local education efforts around tenant rights for residents and landlords along with other tools to limit and prevent evictions. May include providing income-eligible tenants who are sued for eviction a right to a defense attorney, also known as a local right to counsel.
- Advocate for expedited utility hookups to residential properties to ensure timely occupation of tenants and to avoid vacant units staying off market and project delays.
- Advocate for and support budget propositions that either increase or provide for stable funding for emergency rental assistance programs (ARPA) that ended in early 2023.
- Support and promote the adoption of dedicated sources of funding that leverage public investments into local and/or regional housing trust funds.
- Advocate for investment in water, wastewater, electric and other infrastructure systems necessary to support the development and preservation of safe, healthy, affordable housing choices.
- Uplift legislative proposals for statewide water resource mapping to prevent anti-housing local governments from using water scarcity and restrictions to deter housing development.

Immigration Policy Platform

VISION

We envision communities across the San Joaquin Valley meaningfully include immigrants and refugees, regardless of their home country, income, or residence. And that these residents can access support services, economic opportunity, high quality legal representation and meaningful civic participation. A just, equitable and prosperous San Joaquin Valley requires an inclusive democracy and due process for all.

BACKGROUND

Immigrants and refugees are essential to California and predominately live, work and play in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. According to the 2020 Census, the estimated immigrant population for the eight-county region is 926,000. Those who are foreign-born in the San Joaquin Valley comprise 22% of the population and make up 34% of its workforce. The region has a long history of refugee resettlement from many parts of the world, including Southeast Asia, Central America, and the Middle East; a process that continues today. In the San Joaquin Valley, 284,000 undocumented persons call the region home, while 321,000 U.S. citizens and 85,000 lawful permanent residents reside with an undocumented family member. Approximately 13% of California's DACA-eligible residents live in the San Joaquin Valley.

The San Joaquin Valley also contributes in a myriad of ways to the regional economy and the fiscal wellbeing of local communities. In addition to the well-known contributions to the regional labor market, immigrants pay taxes, establish businesses, and create jobs. In Fresno County alone, in 2018 immigrants paid an estimated \$1.2 billion in taxes and had a spending power of \$3.6 billion. There were also 10,569 immigrant entrepreneurs in the county, providing a wide range of goods and services.

From January 2017 – January 2021, changes to federal policies created fear, confusion and uncertainty among immigrant and refugee communities. Local organizations work tirelessly to support the community and mitigate harmful impacts, but they largely operate in a context devoid of meaningful local governments' responses to federal policies. While a harmful public charge rule that disallows families' access to health and nutrition programs, including other benefits has been rescinded, the fear and confusion about immigrants' ability to access social services persists. This has been especially devastating during the pandemic when immigrants have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and the resulting economic hardships. Immigrant families are often left out of economic relief and recovery programs and efforts or are fearful of receiving assistance due to immigration status.

Immigration enforcement leaves low-income immigrants vulnerable to detention and without the ability to pay bond, resulting in family separations and financial hardship. In 2018, there were 2,279 ICE-related arrests in the San Joaquin Valley, with Kern County having the highest number of arrests (1,235). Despite state laws that aim to protect immigrants, local law enforcement agencies continuously collaborate with federal authorities like ICE. The dearth of low-cost quality legal service providers, who can offer representation in the client's language of choice, means many immigrants ordered to appear in immigration court cannot secure legal representation. This is especially true in rural areas. In all cases, lack of representation greatly reduces their chance of being granted relief.

PATHWAY

To address the challenges and attacks on our immigrant and refugee communities, we stand united in our call to:

- Secure robust public and private investments to facilitate COVID-19 economic relief and recovery, and access to economic wellbeing for all families and small business owners regardless of immigration status.
- Establish programs designed to promote immigrant economic mobility and entrepreneurship, irrespective of immigration status.
- Ensure that every government, public, and non-governmental institution serving our diverse immigrant community provides equitable language access and engages residents with utmost respect and dignity.
- Secure partnerships with local governments and educational institutions to encourage pro-immigrant policies and increased opportunities for education, inclusion, and access to support services.
- Abolish racial profiling and mass incarceration of immigrants in the San Joaquin Valley.
- Advocate for full implementation of SB54 so local law enforcement agencies respect the rights of immigrants in alignment with California law and that local governments enact more protective policies.
- Establish an immigration bond fund and a removal defense fund, not restricted by criminal history, for individuals in detention and removal proceedings across the San Joaquin Valley.
- Promote public and private funding initiatives that 1) foster the growth and sustainability of non-profit immigration legal service providers serving rural and remote urban areas, and 2) are reflective of, and responsive to, the legal needs of San Joaquin Valley residents.
- Advocate for humane immigration reform that ensures accessible and inclusive pathways to legal protections and citizenship for immigrants and policies that keep families together.
- Strengthen consumer protections against immigration fraud by predatory *notarios publicos*, immigration consultants, and attorneys.
- Secure meaningful investments to strengthen the capacity of organizations serving recently arrived refugees and asylum-seekers to provide an array of support services.

Land Use & Planning Policy Platform

VISION

Land use planning and policy decisions are centered on residents' priorities and led by communities. San Joaquin Valley communities in need are prioritized in the allocation and distribution of local and state funds.

BACKGROUND

By 2050, the San Joaquin Valley is projected to be home to one-tenth of California's population. However, misguided land use and disinvestment in existing communities have already resulted in widespread urbanization of farmland, habitat, and other green space; disproportionate exposure to and health impacts from pollution-causing land uses in disadvantaged communities; a lack of safe places for physical activity and a dearth of decent and affordable housing. Land use decisions are one of the primary reasons that the strongest predictor of a person's lifespan and quality of life is their zip code.

PATHWAY

To address disparities in land use and planning, we stand united in our call to:

- Raise community awareness and advocate with agencies to promote holistic, sustainable, and mixed-use communities with access to public transportation infrastructure, amenities, and complete streets. Promote requirements that industry not be intermixed with residential land through defined land use and/or economic development incentives.
- Promote private and public investment without displacement by requiring strong anti-displacement policies, community benefit agreements, meaningful and robust public engagement practices, and inclusionary housing policies that create mixed-income neighborhoods.
- Educate local decision makers and community residents to ensure that city- and county-level general plans commit to directing new development and resources into existing disadvantaged communities instead of new towns and greenfield development at the periphery, and that regional transportation investments in each county's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy are selected accordingly.
- Equip local decision makers and community residents to ensure that zoning promotes infill development and allows for alternative forms of housing, including accessory dwelling units and smaller housing units.
- Conserve agricultural land and natural habitat to promote access to green space and help mitigate the environmental impacts of development.

- Require mitigation of environmental impacts of projects that consume habitat, agricultural land or other open space through permanent conservation easements, with mitigation ratios of at least 1:1 for farmland and appropriate higher ratios as appropriate for habitat.
- Secure the adoption of school district policies that support the use of public-school playgrounds for neighborhood use.
- Educate agencies to adopt policies and raise public awareness to ensure that vacant municipal lots will be conveyed through long-term ground leases that secure community control of rather than sell these scarce resources.
- Require jurisdictions to support, enforce, fund, and implement public engagement processes that prioritize underserved communities for proposed residential and industrial development.
- Promote the need for adoption of Good Neighbor guidelines that address potential impacts of diesel particulate matter to neighborhoods from on-road trucks associated with warehouses and distribution centers.
- Support robust funding for conservation to help meet state and federal goals of conserving 30% of natural and working lands by 2030, including conservation investments in the San Joaquin Valley to support community land trusts, biodiversity, equity, and access to the outdoors for all communities. Educate policymakers on the need to maintain funding for conservation programs at levels commensurate with 30x30 commitments, both in years of budget surplus and in years of budget shortfall.
- Advocate for urban jurisdiction spheres of influence to be reimagined as equity and justice areas bolstered by increased use of targeted urban growth boundaries, affordable housing mandates, directed mitigation investments and the use of community land trusts as multi-benefit implementing infrastructures to achieve progressive planning, development, and conservation outcomes.