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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **County of Santa Clara Starts First-in-Nation “Universal Basic Income” Program for Young Adults Transitioning Out of Foster Care**

*Pilot program offers a \$1,000 monthly stipend to 24-year-olds who will no longer be eligible for foster assistance*

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF.**— The first payments have been made as part of an innovative new pilot program aimed at helping young adults transition out of the Santa Clara County foster care system – the first such “Universal Basic Income” (UBI) initiative in the nation that specifically benefits this vulnerable population.

Under the program – approved by the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors last month – transitioning young adults who age out of the foster care system when they turn 24 will receive \$1,000 a month for one year. The approved \$900,000 in funding will be enough to assist 72 former foster youth and perform an in-depth evaluation of the pilot program. The County’s investment will be enhanced by support from partners such as MyPath and Excite Credit Union.

“Youth transitioning out of the Santa Clara County foster care system are desperately in need of ongoing support,” said Supervisor Dave Cortese. “Providing basic income for these young adults will better support their transition and empower them to find success, well-being and independence.”

Supervisor Cortese championed the plan after speaking with Gisèle Huff, president of the nonprofit organization the Gerald Huff Fund for Humanity. The group is dedicated to the concept of Universal Basic Income as an investment in society. The conversation between Cortese and Huff focused on UBI targeted specifically toward transitioning foster youth.

Huff said financial assistance can be especially important for vulnerable populations, such as those leaving the foster care system.

“Providing UBI to Santa Clara County’s transitioning foster kids is literally a lifeline for them at this devastating time,” Huff said. “It opens the door to making it available to all marginalized people who desperately need a floor to stand on.”

Excite Credit Union, which advocates for foster youth, has agreed to provide in-kind support to the pilot program by offering financial mentorship in coordination with MyPath to all 72 young adults who chose to utilize their services. MyPath is providing training to six financial coaches from Excite Credit Union around effective financial coaching and mentoring with young adults and will provide ongoing support for the program.

The credit union is an advocate for foster youth, said Aleta Smith, Community Relations Specialist for Excite Credit Union. Ms. Smith has a personal commitment to working with these young adults as a former foster youth herself.

Nayeli Grano, who is transitioning out of the foster care system and is not part of the UBI program, said such assistance can be life changing.

“It’s not just about financial help,” said Grano, 23. “This helps with mental health – it improves self-esteem, it makes former foster youth able to provide for themselves and provide for their kids. It means a lot more time to breathe, to actually work on starting a career and going to school. They won’t be able to even afford housing with a minimum wage job with no extra help. Sometimes that means you have to leave your dreams behind – just because we are foster kids doesn’t mean we can’t have dreams, too, and follow them.”

County Chief Operating Officer, Miguel Márquez, emphasized the importance of such a program given the current pandemic.

“The County is the safety net for our community’s most vulnerable populations, including former foster youth,” Márquez said. “These youth often don’t have support systems in place that provide stability, so the County developed this basic income pilot program to provide at least some level of consistent financial support. Through this pilot program, the County hopes to learn important lessons about how to position youth for long-term stability as they age out of the foster care system.”

County officials, community partners, and foster youth advocates held a press conference on July 27, 2020. Watch it [here](#).

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### **ABOUT THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA**

The County of Santa Clara government serves a diverse, multi-cultural population of 1.9 million residents in Santa Clara County, California, making it more populous than 14 states in the U.S. The County provides essential services to its residents, including public health protection, environmental stewardship, medical services through the County of Santa Clara Health System, child and adult protection services, homelessness prevention and solutions, roads, park services, libraries, emergency response to disasters, protection of minority communities and those under threat, access to a fair criminal justice system, and many other public benefits.

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