



**A Decade of Organizing to Build a Fund for Children and Youth**  
*A Statement of Facts from the Invest in Youth Coalition*  
August 5, 2016

**Summary:**

After a decade of failed attempts to partner with Richmond city officials on identifying resources for public and private services for young people, community-based organizations involved in the Invest in Youth Coalition decided to bring a measure to establish a dedicated fund for children and youth to the voters. Richmond Kids First proposes that the City of Richmond set aside 3% of its general fund as dedicated to services for young people ages 0-24.<sup>1</sup> The measure seeks to hold investment in public and non-profit youth programs accountable to achieving defined outcomes and results to insure effectiveness through annual evaluations, strategic planning and a resident oversight board.

For over a decade, young people and their allies have been told that it's "not the right time"; that a mere 3% of Richmond's budget is too much to ask, will force layoffs, bankrupt the city, or, in the words of Mayor Butt, "sack the city's treasury". With the high rates of violence, trauma, poor health and social outcomes, and stress experienced by young people in Richmond, the Invest in Youth Coalition feels that we cannot wait another decade to put more resources into prevention and positive futures for Richmond's young people.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, with a constant threat of bankruptcy, Invest in Youth Coalition hopes to be partner with the city and other community-based organizations to identify ways to increase revenue, reduce extraneous spending and reallocate funds toward prevention.

Through grassroots canvassing and support from a paid canvassing firm for the final push, Richmond Kids First collected 6,476 valid signatures. On the morning of June 25, 2016, the County Registrar sent a certificate of validation over to the Richmond City Clerk to confirm the measure qualified for the November 2016 ballot. Having been alerted on Wednesday, July 20 that the validation certificate was coming, the City Clerk prepared a staff report on the measure to be reviewed at the Tuesday, July 26 City Council meeting and it was posted as an agenda item. This was crucial because the City Council is obligated to review city measures and pass a resolution to place them on the ballot prior to August 12, 2016 in order for the measure to be placed on the November 2016 ballot.

On Friday evening, the previously posted City Council agenda was amended to remove the Richmond Kids First item and then re-posted on the City's website. Therefore requiring that 5 out of 7 City Council members pass a motion at the beginning of the July 26 meeting in order to place the agenda item back on the agenda rather than it automatically being a part of the agenda. At the meeting, despite over 50 youth and 50 adult allies present and signed up to speak in support of the agenda, City Council and the Mayor failed to uphold the democratic

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<sup>1</sup> We decided to include young adults ages 19-24 who are in transition. We understand this age group to be in desperate need of services and an age group that falls between the cracks of adult and youth services. In particular, the measure prioritizes young adults transitioning out of Juvenile Hall, the criminal legal system and foster care; queer, transgender, homeless, immigrant and disabled young adults.

<sup>2</sup> Contra Costa Community Health Indicators, 2007, RPD, 2009; City Data, 2013; NCCD/SAYFA, 2006.

process and respect the will of voters to place this measure on the ballot. City Council members Jovanka Beckles, Gayle McLaughlin, Vinay Pimplé and Nathaniel Bates abstained from a vote. Mayor Butt opposed. Only Councilmembers Jael Myrick and Eduardo Martinez supported placing the item on the agenda. Both stated respect for the democratic process as the reason.

Having refused to pass a resolution on Tuesday, July 26, City Council and the Mayor had the opportunity to correct their undermining of voters, the young people who worked for four months to gather signatures with adult allies and the democratic process. Once again they refused to hold a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, August 2 to pass a resolution. As such, the measure will not be on the November 2016 ballot as requested by nearly 6,500 voters.

**City Council and the Mayor claim that we missed a deadline, but, in truth, there was no deadline.** The signatures were validated by the Monday morning prior to the Tuesday, July 26th meeting. It is ONLY because City Council and the Mayor dislike the Richmond Kids First measure and are exercising bias to prevent the democratic process and allow the voters of Richmond to decide whether or not Richmond Kids First should pass. **Though City Council has delayed democracy, they cannot stop it.** Richmond Kids First has the valid signatures it needs and will be placed on the ballot in June 2018, at the next regularly scheduled election.

#### **Summary of the Measure:**

The Richmond Kids First Initiative seeks to secure 3% of Richmond's general budget for a dedicated funding stream for children and youth services above and beyond the funds currently allocated for these services for a minimum of 10 years. After 10 years we propose that the initiative be re-introduced and updated to reflect the learning over the first 10 years of operations. We propose the fund increases to 3% (\$4.3 million)<sup>3</sup> per year over five years: \$250,000 in Year 1; \$700,000 in Year 2; 1% in Year 3 (\$1.2 million); 2% in Year 4 (\$2.4 million); and, in Year 5 the fund will cap at 3% (\$4.3 million). We seek to secure this fund through a ballot initiative that includes resident oversight from a community-public collaborative board of community-based organizations, parents/guardians, youth and public agency representatives. At the passing of the measure, **a baseline of city resources that currently go toward youth services would be established** so that the funds secured through the measure would increase and not substitute current spending.

The purpose of the fund is to increase quality public and community-based, non-profit programming for children and youth ages 0-18 and transitional young adults ages 19-24 most impacted by harm, inequity and lack of access to support and services. This includes but is not limited to: system-involved, immigrant and homeless young people and their families, as well as those living in poverty, LGBT young people, teen parents and families, single mothers, young people with disabilities, and those involved in the criminal legal and foster care system.

Modeled after the success of similar funds in Oakland and San Francisco, the fund also seeks to create a more integrated and coordinated citywide network of effective, relevant, accessible and well-utilized support and services for young people through increasing the overall programming and resources available and greater collaboration across and between public services and community-based non-profits. Eighty-percent of the fund is earmarked for community-based, non-profit organizations and public-non-profit collaborations. The remaining 20% is available to increase current city spending on public services for young people above and beyond the baseline. The fund includes 10% for administration (including staffing of the fund and/or a Dept of Children and Youth to run the fund and coordinate city programming) and

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<sup>3</sup> These estimates are based on the 2015 City Budget.

5% for annual evaluation and strategic planning to assure that the money invested is being used for quality and effective programming and fulfilling previously unmet needs.

The resident oversight board will consist of a minimum of seven young people ages 15-24 and a maximum of eight residents ages 25 and over. The purpose of the board is to assure the fund is fulfilling its mandate as outlined in the measure and enabling legislation, accountable to the needs of the community as identified through a public strategic planning process and maintaining quality and efficiency as reflected in an annual evaluation. The intention is to bring public accountability and input to both community-based non-profit and public programs.

As in Oakland and San Francisco, the fund intends to bring additional public and private dollars to contribute to the investment of the city into services and programs for young people. The Invest in Youth Coalition hopes to partner with the City on identifying resources that put city funding into prevention and a strong future for Richmond and its young people.

### **History of Organizing to Secure Resources for Young People in Richmond:**

**2008:** Tony Thurmond, previous City Council member, was tasked with implementing a study session to explore the question of a Fund and/or Department for Children, Youth and their Families. Youth Together, RYSE's founding agency, was the lead organization calling for this work. The study session never happened.

**2009:** The RYSE Collaborative approached Mayor McLaughlin to explore how to utilize Measure T for a Fund for Children and Youth in Richmond. Measure T didn't pass and without a sustainable revenue possibility in the middle of a recession, the City once again halted on moving forward.

**2010:** RYSE, in partnership with Healthy Richmond, convened a small working group to rethink the strategies around a Fund. They worked on connecting this to the Soda Tax to establish a new revenue source which did not pass. Members reached out to both Councilmember McLaughlin (at the time Mayor) and Former Councilmember Jeff Ritterman.

**2014:** For over a year, RYSE was working with members of the City's finance department, select Councilmembers and their staff, as well as representatives from RPA to ensure Measure U funds would be allocated toward the vision of a Fund for Children and Youth. Richmond residents passed a half-cent sales tax, Measure U. The Measure, brings in approximately \$8-\$9 million in revenue per a year and was suppose to fund "essential city services, such as public safety, public health and wellness programs, city youth programs and street paving." Passed through City Council as a resolution without voter approval or oversight, the fund can and has been used almost entirely to cover the budget deficit.

**2014:** The Invest in Youth Coalition launches to discuss ways to increase overall coordination of children, youth and young adult services across Richmond and to identify shared funding sources to increase public and community-based, non-profit programs. An open meeting was held at City Hall to discuss strategies moving forward. Many city service employees were present.

**2015:** Invest in Youth Coalition ("IYC" or "Coalition") decides to focus on a measure to establish a fund for children and youth in Richmond. They launch the Richmond Kids First Initiative.



**Organizing Goals of Campaign**

- **Whether we win or lose the ballot measure, we plan to accomplish the following:**
  - Build a shared vision for the needs and priorities of children and youth in Richmond;
  - Continue to build productive collaborations across community-based service, community institutions and public agencies;
  - Increase voter registration and turn out for Richmond residents ages 18-30 by 500;
  - Inspire and improve civic engagement skills of young people;
  - Create more responsiveness and accountability of government to young people; and
  - Engage new funders and funding sources for children, youth and families in Richmond.

## **Building Richmond Kids First - Collecting 6,476 Richmond Voter Signatures**

Following this long-history, we decided to take this to voters and let the community decide if it wanted to dedicate funds to its young people. IYC set out to create a measure to place on the November 2016 ballot and initiate a broader campaign to elevate a citywide discussion about what young people in Richmond need toward their safety, well-being and futures. We immediately recruited a team of 12 young people to partner with IYC on identifying the needs and prioritizing what to ask for in a measure put to voters.

Building off of best practices in Oakland and San Francisco, we sought advice from the people who built and have run those funds. They emphasized several things: 1) The need for a citizen's oversight board; 2) The need to invest in third-party strategic planning and evaluation; 3) The need to establish an accurate baseline so that the spending on young people is above and beyond current spending; 4) The need to limit public agencies applying for funds and the percentage of the fund that can go toward public agencies versus community-based services. These recommendations were based on many experiences in which there were attempts to use the fund to cover services that did not directly serve young people and/or to substitute what the City or County should already be spending on public services (including education) rather than creating new and expanding existing public and community-based programs and services.

Funding the Next Generation (FNG), headed by Margaret Brodtkin who organized the campaign that secured a fund for children and youth in San Francisco and then ran it for 4.5 years, was funded by several foundations to support cities and counties in California that were looking to establish similar funds. FNG and various consultants they partner with have provided valuable, pro-bono expertise throughout this process to the IYC. However, ultimately, it was the Coalition and Youth Committee that waded through all the advice and information and developed the measure and have made key decisions about the campaign process. RYSE Center has bottom-lined the coordination in accountability to both the Coalition and Youth Committee.

The priorities and programs highlighted in the measure were informed by several important sources: 1) The Coalition organizations and youth committee who sought information from their constituencies; 2) RYSE's listening campaign that included interviews of over 450 young people about what their experiences are and what they need from adults and programs that serve them; and 3) Research from the City and County including the police department and departments of mental health, public health, and behavioral health.

*Community Support for Measure: According to a poll completed by FM3, an overwhelming majority of residents support dedicating 3% of the City's budget to services for young people. Respondents were read the information in the box below.*

A coalition of community leaders is working to increase funding for services to protect and support youth in the City of Richmond. These services could include:

- before- and after-school programs;
- youth leadership and empowerment programs;
- youth employment and outdoor recreation programs;
- health and nutrition programs for young people and parents;
- mental health programs for youth;
- programs to support foster youth and homeless youth and families; and
- media, arts, and technology programs for youth.

They have proposed dedicating three percent of the City of Richmond's annual budget to programs that serve children and youth. This funding would be in addition to funds already allocated for that purpose.

- ⇒ **84 percent of Richmond residents support dedicating this additional funding for youth services**, including nearly two thirds of residents (64%) who “strongly” support such a policy. Only 11% stand in opposition. The concept is widely supported among parents (89%) and those without children (84%), as well as at least seven in ten residents across lines of age, gender, race and ethnicity education, income, political party, and homeownership.
- ⇒ **Residents rate lack of opportunities for youth as one of the most serious problems facing the City.** Seven in ten residents (71%) say *the lack of opportunity for youth, in general*, is an “extremely serious” or “very serious” problem for Richmond residents.
- ⇒ **Residents rank additional funding for many specific types of funding for children and youth as high priorities.** At least seven in ten residents rate providing additional funding for each of the specific programs listed below as “extremely” or “very important.” Richmond residents are most enthusiastic about dedicating additional funding to help youth facing health challenges, homelessness, poverty, or involved in the juvenile justice system.

Program	% Extremely/ Very Important
Helping homeless children and teens stay in school	95%
Offering substance abuse treatment for youth	86%
Helping low-income parents afford child care	85%
Helping at-risk youth get and keep a job	84%
Providing preventive health care to keep children and young people from getting sick	84%
Providing youth job training programs	83%
Providing crisis intervention support for families	79%
Providing recreation and sports activities for young people	79%
Offering after-school programs for school-age children	78%
Providing violence prevention programs for youth	78%
Offering technology education including coding and software skills to youth	78%
Connecting youth with summer employment opportunities	78%
Providing conflict resolution programs for youth	77%
Providing affordable, high-quality preschool	74%
Providing media, arts, and technology education programs	73%
Providing arts and cultural activities for children and youth	72%
Providing physical and mental health services in a child’s native language	71%
Providing outdoor education and recreation programs	71%
Helping young parents learn about infant and toddlers’ development and needs	71%
Providing youth leadership and empowerment programs	70%
Providing bullying prevention programs and education	70%

Drafting the measure:

In drafting the measure, we looked over measures passed in Oakland and San Francisco and drafted in other counties in California. Based on the research and information gathered above, we identified program and population priorities. This also informed our decision to include those public services primarily serving young people and to exclude those that do not specifically work with young people and should be covered by other public funds. ***With consideration for the on-going struggle of the City of Richmond to get out of a long-history of financial crisis, the measure has a five-year start up phase, with the fund reaching 3% of the general fund in Year 5. We also added an emergency provision to reduce the amount allocated in case of a fiscal emergency. This is not in either the Oakland or San Francisco funds.***

The measure was drafted and reviewed by the Coalition, those who identified themselves as being interested in supporting the campaign (many became endorsers and part of the Campaign Committee) and by the Youth Committee, then reviewed by a pro bono lawyer, and then finalized by a lawyer hired and paid by the campaign.

Canvassing - Grassroots Signature Gathering:  
In discussions with those who have done this in other places and communications with the City Clerk, we were led to believe that we needed 10% of registered voters to sign the petition for the measure to be included in the November 2016 ballot. This meant collecting approximately 4,300 signatures. With this as our goal we created a plan and schedule to collect these signatures ourselves on evenings and weekends.



Over 25 young people came out for three hours on weekend evenings and up to ten hours on Saturday and Sunday to do outreach and collect signatures with adult allies. We paid Richmond residents to coordinate signature gathering. Young people were offered incentives of gift cards for their efforts but put in dozens of hours as volunteers as well.

Six weeks before our intended turn-in deadline (end of May, early June), a friend of one of the proponents who is a lawyer shared that we needed 15% for a Charter Amendment. The lawyer for the campaign confirmed this using State and City codes, despite continued insistence from the City that the number needed was 10%. Upon discovering we now needed 6,466 signatures to place this on the November 2016 ballot, we scrambled and raised funds to hire professional canvassers to double efforts. Meanwhile, we kept up with our grassroots signature gathering. In the end, we collected half of the signatures needed through grassroots efforts and another half through a paid canvassing firm.

In the process of collecting signatures, we also collected over **500** voter registration cards. We intend to collect X more before the deadline.

The Validation Process:

On June 22, 2016, the Coalition and Youth Committee dropped off the petitions to the Richmond City Clerk who immediately counted the signatures and then passed them onto the County Registrar the next day to begin the validation process as soon as possible. Due to a high number of new voter registration that turned out to be not valid and collection of signatures from El Sobrante by voters who believed they were able to vote in Richmond, our validation of a random sample of signatures came in at 105%. We needed 110% to not have every signature checked. So, on July 14 we were told that the County needed to count each signature rather than rely on a random sample. On Friday, July 22, 2016, we were told that the validation process was complete but the report needed to be sent from the County to the City on Monday morning. With this knowledge, City staff placed the item on the City Council agenda for Tuesday, July 26 - at 4:59pm, the item remained on the agenda. Later Friday evening the agenda item was removed from the agenda by Mayor Tom Butt. On Monday morning, the City Clerk received the final validation report from the County Registrar that confirmed that the measure qualified for the ballot with 6,476 valid signatures.

City Council's Refusal to Allow the Measure onto the Ballot:

For a city measure to get placed on the ballot, City Council has to pass a resolution to put it on the ballot at a regular City Council meeting. They cannot refuse to do so because they personally don't like it or their political party does not agree with it. If it has valid signatures and they were collected according to election rules, which Richmond Kids First were, they have to pass a resolution. SO, the only way to prevent City Council from passing a resolution was to prevent the measure from being on the City Council agenda at all.

On Friday night, June 22, Mayor Butt posted on Facebook, "I'll do anything I can to legally prevent this measure from getting on the ballot." Having removed the item from the agenda on Friday night, despite knowledge that the validation process was complete and full report would be in on Monday morning prior to the Tuesday evening meeting, Mayor Butt removed the item knowing that it would take a vote of 5 out of 7 City Council members to place the item back on the agenda if not still on as of end of the day on Friday, June 22.

Over 100 people showed up to show support for Richmond Kids First on Tuesday, July 26th. Nearly 40 young people and 20 adult allies from community-based children and youth organizations and voting residents spoke. Though Councilmember Jael Myrick proposed adding the agenda item back on and allowing the democratic process of voters being allowed to vote on a measure they signed to have on the ballot, his fellow City Council members refused to allow it onto the agenda. Instead City Council members Jovanka Beckles and Gayle McLaughlin, representing Richmond Progressive Alliance, used the platform to state why they oppose the measure.



However, it goes against the Brown Voting Act to prevent a measure from being on the ballot that has the valid signatures required because any public official dislikes it. Along with Councilmembers Vinay Pimplé and Nathaniel Bates, Beckles and McLaughlin “abstained” from a vote. Only Councilmember Jael Myrick and Vice Mayor Eduardo Martinez supported placing the measure on the agenda. Mayor Butt, of course, opposed. The result was that the measure was not placed on the agenda.

Since, Richmond Kids First legal team has submitted evidence of legal precedence and protocol that suggests that City Council and the Mayor are not being accountable to their duty to uphold and encourage democratic process:

“It is important to note that the California Supreme Court has declared that “the sovereign people’s initiative power [is] one of the most precious rights of our democratic process,” and that the courts are therefore duty-bound “to resolve any reasonable doubts in favor of the exercise of this precious right.” (*Strauss v. Horton* (2009) 46 Cal.4th 364, 453, abrogated on other grounds in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) 135 S.Ct. 2584, quoting *Raven v. Deukmejian* (1990) 52 Cal.3d 336, 341.) We respectfully urge the Council to resolve any doubts that it may have in favor of giving Richmond voters the chance to vote on the Richmond Kids First Initiative in November 2016. Doing so would comply with both the letter and the spirit of the Brown Act, and promote the public’s fundamental right to consider an initiative it has now qualified for the ballot.”

Despite an outpour of support and encouragement from young people, residents and allies and legal evidence of their obligation, City Council and the Mayor have further refused to call for a regular meeting on Tuesday, August 2, prior to recess for the rest of August (as their own procedural rules call for) to pass a resolution to place Richmond Kids First on the ballot. There is a precedence of City Council meeting in August to consider items that cannot wait for their return from recess. Last year there were three additional meetings to consider a rent control ordinance that RPA City Council members were working on.

***City Council and the Mayor claim that we missed a deadline, but, in truth, there was no deadline.*** The signatures were validated by the Monday morning prior to the Tuesday, July 26th meeting. It is ONLY because City Council and the Mayor disapprove of the Richmond Kids First measure and are exercising bias to prevent the democratic process and allow the voters of Richmond to decide whether or not Richmond Kids First should pass.

Though City Council has delayed democracy, they cannot stop it. Richmond Kids First has the valid signatures it needs and will be placed on the ballot in June 2018, at the next regularly scheduled election.

**Invest in Youth Coalition Members:** RYSE Center, Community Health for Asian Americans, The Ed Fund, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, Healthy Richmond, YES Nature to Neighborhoods, Education Matters, Funding the Next Generation, Pogo Park, Building Blocks for Kids.

**Additional Endorsers:** Supervisor John Gioia, Urban Tilth, California School-Based Health Alliance, Students for Education Reform, Shields-Reid Residents Neighborhood Council, Teachers 4 Social Justice, CBE Action, Mindful Life Project.