April 27, 2022

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

I am requesting funding in the amount of $973,552 for Catalyst - Children's Home of Stockton in the fiscal year 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

The project sponsor for this project is the Children's Home of Stockton, and the project is located at 430 N. Pilgrim Street, Stockton CA 95205.

Children’s Home of Stockton (CHS) intends to use Fiscal Year 2023 Community Project funding to fund the Catalyst Program. In 2021, CHS, in collaboration with United Way of San Joaquin County, and with funding provided by the City of Stockton, opened Catalyst, an 18-bed Transitional Housing Program for homeless Transition Age Youth (TAY) ages 18-24. The purpose of CHS is to provide supportive housing, job development, mental health services, case management, education, and resources referrals to other services. The goal of CHS is to prevent youth homelessness and help participants establish self-sufficiency and find permanent housing as they exit Catalyst. Providing a supportive, safe place for TAY participants allows them to focus on continuing their education or securing employment rather than living on the streets and being vulnerable to risky and dangerous situations. This funding will be applied to sustain the Catalyst Program, which has the capacity to serve 18 TAY concurrently.

Funding Catalyst is a good use of taxpayer funds as it will help address and reduce youth homelessness as resources for youth remain scarce and limited. Catalyst fills a critical need in our community to prevent and end youth homelessness. It meets the shelter and service needs of TAY, who are required by circumstance to live on their own. Many have aged out of the foster care system and are still in need of support, including a safe place to live with basic needs met so they can focus on their mental health, employment, or education. Many of the TAY have experienced childhood trauma and homelessness. They have endured lack of basic needs for survival, family support, food insecurity and community connection. Many are high school dropouts and without this opportunity they are at risk for continuing the cycle of poverty and crime. Often this age group of 18-24 does not qualify for other shelter or housing services. Before the opening of Catalyst, there were only eight beds for homeless youth in the City of Stockton.
CHS has served children and youth in the foster care and education systems since 1882, and currently operates the largest 34-bed Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program. The creation of Catalyst contributes to the elimination of homelessness in our community by dedicating three homes to shelter up to 18 TAY and provide comprehensive supportive services to help them reach their goals of securing permanent housing.

When Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program youth leave CHS, they have a Transition Aftercare plan in place and supportive services are provided for youth and their families for up to six months after they leave CHS care. But for many high-risk foster youths who age out of the system at age 18, that is not the case. The Catalyst Program is needed because it addresses San Joaquin County’s growing housing crisis and barriers regarding homeless youth that has only been exacerbated by COVID-19. The Catalyst Referral Committee was formed with local community organizations who serve the TAY homeless population and see a direct need for the program. It serves as a direct way to provide outreach and identify TAY participants who are eligible for the Catalyst Program.

Homelessness in San Joaquin County is an ever-present challenge. According to the 2020 San Joaquin County Strategic Plan and the San Joaquin Continuum of Care’s (CoC) Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, from 2015 to 2019, the number of people identified as experiencing homelessness has increased dramatically. It has grown from 1,708 to 2,631 individuals, an increase of 56%. It found that 5.6% of people experiencing homelessness were TAY between the ages of 18 and 24 years (148 out of 2,631). According to the San Joaquin Continuum of Care 2019 Homeless Census and Survey Data Dashboard, the number of people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness is highest in Stockton (921 individuals). This is not surprising given that Stockton is the largest city in the county and is also the hub for many of the services available in San Joaquin County.

The PIT Count may also be an underrepresentation of the young adults facing homelessness. In 2018, San Joaquin County’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) tracked a total of 1,000 homeless individuals 18 to 24 years old who were provided services. This proves there are not enough shelters or beds to accommodate the need.

The Catalyst Program was established to address the significant need for TAY within the community to have continued support which includes immediate housing, case management, counseling, mental health services, life skills training, workforce development, assistance with workforce development, job search and preparation, assistance with continued education, and referrals to substance abuse treatment, or other necessary programs. In addition to safe housing, TAY with extensive histories of homelessness often require comprehensive service engagement and relationship-building with supportive staff to establish a foundation of trust and rapport so they can successfully exit homelessness permanently. The goal for every TAY participant is to establish self-sufficiency and permanent housing as they leave the Catalyst Program.

Catalyst gives its participants safe and stable accommodations in a family-style setting while surrounding them with the services they need to achieve independence. TAY participants take charge of their case management and transition planning in conjunction with being provided access to services, which are facilitated by dedicated staff including the following: Youth Services Director, TAY Coordinators, TAY Clinicians, TAY Coaches, and a TAY Outreach Worker. In addition, referrals and contacts for youth are made to agencies that CHS has formal and informal partnerships with throughout the community. CHS operates in a culturally sensitive, trauma-informed environment with case management, mental health, vocational and educational services tailored to each participant’s individual needs, strengths, and growth opportunities.
I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress