



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Hilary Crowley

hcrowley@sjgov.org | (209) 468-2997

San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors Approve Funding for Fentanyl Intervention and Response Team and Emergency Homeless Shelter in Tracy

Stockton, CA - Yesterday, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors approved critical investments for two public safety and human services programs totaling \$9,424,932.

By unanimous vote, the Board approved a \$2,252,134 appropriation to support the establishment of the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Fentanyl Intervention and Response Safety Team (FIRST), adding 11 dedicated staff positions to the department.

Like many areas throughout the State, San Joaquin County faces a rapidly increasing, near epidemic-level fentanyl crisis resulting in often preventable overdoses and death. Due to County budget cuts following the mortgage financial crisis, the San Joaquin District Attorney's narcotics unit which once had 99 attorneys was disbanded in 2007 and never restored. Currently, there is only one dedicated and one half-time narcotics prosecutor in an office that reviewed 293 cases involving Fentanyl from June 2022 through June 2023, in which 121 were charged as felonies.

The FIRST program is a three-pronged strategy to combat illegal fentanyl sales, use and tragedies that includes intervention, response and safety, and partnership with enforcement agencies.

"The safety of our citizens, especially our children, is always our top priority," said Supervisor Robert Rickman, Chair of the San Joaquin Board of Supervisors. "Fentanyl related deaths among children have risen significantly and as a father of two college-age daughters, these stories break my heart. San Joaquin County is committed to fighting the scourge of fentanyl on all fronts, including by educating our community of the dangers of fentanyl and prosecuting those who deal in this poison."

Also, by unanimous vote, the Board approved a transfer of \$7,167,798 from the American Rescue Plan Act Fund to the Public Improvement Budget for the completion of an Emergency Shelter in the City of Tracy.

This funding follows the Board's July, 2021 allocation of \$3,661,113 to support initial construction and related development costs for the emergency shelter for unsheltered homeless individuals. Once completed, the Arbor Avenue Shelter is expected to play a critical role in reducing homelessness in Tracy and the South County region, directly supporting the goals of the Regional Strategic Plan on Homelessness, the City of Tracy Strategic Plan on Homelessness, and the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors strategic priority on homelessness.

The approved investment will provide funding to complete Phase 4 of the shelter which includes an addition 68 beds. Currently, people are being turned away as the 48 beds available at the Shelter are frequently full.

"Homelessness isn't confined to any one city. The County has demonstrated its commitment to bringing people off the streets and reversing homeless numbers locally," said Chair Rickman. The Arbor Avenue Shelter is a great example of regional cooperation to solve a regional problem. By working together, we can make significant progress getting unhoused people off the street and into a safer environment where they can access wrap-around services."

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