

My name is Rachel Rosekind – I live in El Cerrito and serve as District 1 Library Commissioner. Thank you for holding space for community feedback.

A budget should align moral principles with fiscal priorities. In California, “embarrassment of riches” encapsulates the state’s entrenched, exorbitant, and escalating wealth and resource inequality.

We must stop privileging the perceived and inherited entitlements of the few over the basic rights of the many. This budget cycle is an opportunity to harness political muscle and fiscal capacity to redress decades of systemic harm and acknowledge and prevent those that are ongoing. Thus, fiscal priorities should be **preventative, restorative, and remedial NOT palliative and carceral**.

Per the County Administrator’s comments and decades of evidence to substantiate them, Blacks have always borne the disproportionate brunt of hardship and structural racism. Therefore, pace Berkeley and San Jose, I urge the Board to initiate meaningful efforts toward launching an African American Wellness and Cultural Hub.

We need to **implement and institutionalize** levers of support that help community members thrive. American Rescue Plan Act funds should underwrite a guaranteed income pilot whose outcomes are tracked for long-term integration into the budget. Such programs have shown indisputable success, enhancing recipients’ employment, health, and well-being. They shouldn’t be considered our “social safety net”—instead, they represent our moral backbone. And they are hypercritical as inflation rises unabated and the emergent Covid patchwork of support frays, giving way to the broken status quo that preceded it.

Our county detention facility libraries need supplemental funds to increase reference and foreign language materials and enhance the collection’s relevance and currency. Providing tools for successful re-entry is paramount; funding to support detention facility library resources would fortify them.

I also urge you to embed explicit considerations of racial equity and economic justice into discussions of resource allocation and all phases of budget planning, decision making, implementation, and evaluation.

Last, the conversation about inflation’s impact on county services is crucial—Please do not choose the route of fiscal austerity and cut services for those who need it most at the time that they need it most.

Thank you.